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BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS?

Voter heterogeneity and the degree of competitiveness in electoral authoritarian regimes

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

Most authoritarian regimes now organise national-level elections that allow the opposition to compete against the dictator for political power, albeit on unfair and unequal terms. Although the dictator seeks to contain this element of competition in order to thwart opposition victories and enforce his own rule, the decision to organise competitive elections ultimately rests the fate of electoral authoritarian regimes in the hands of the voters. By deciding to cast their ballots either for the dictator or the opposition, individual voters determine the degree of electoral competitiveness – the margin of victory between the dictator and his challengers – and, consequently, whether the elections lead to continued authoritarian rule or potential democratisation. Yet, with the literature predominantly focusing on authoritarian elections from the perspective of the dictator and the opposition, the question of how and why heterogeneous voters make diverging choices at the polls remains poorly understood.

Using Beatriz Magaloni's theory of voter behaviour under electoral authoritarianism, this thesis explores how the electorate's socio-demographic heterogeneity translates into conflicting preferences, thus giving rise to different types of voting behaviours that lead the voters to either support or oppose the dictator, and what the consequences of this heterogeneity are for the degree of electoral competitiveness at the aggregate level.

The relationship between voter heterogeneity and the degree of electoral competitiveness is tested empirically by employing a random effects regression analysis on time-series cross-sectional data that cover the universe of competitive authoritarian elections held at the national level from 1974 to 2006.

Based on this analysis, the author shows the composition of the electorate to be systematically linked to the degree of competitiveness, with the voter's ethnic affiliation and level of income operating as the primary factors mediating vote choice alongside economic growth. The findings are furthermore found to be robust to a number of alternative explanations that involve the strategies of the dictator and the opposition. Finally, the thesis discusses some of the problems and broader implications of the analysis for the study of electoral authoritarian regimes and electoral competitiveness.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
Electoral authoritarian regimes, competitiveness, voter heterogeneity, democratisation

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

Valtaosa nykyisistä autokratioista järjestää säännöllisesti kansalliset vaalit, joissa opposition sallitaan kilpailla poliittisesta vallasta diktaattorin kanssa, olkoonkin epäoikeudenmukaisilla ja epätasa-arvoisilla ehdoilla. Vaikka diktaattori pyrkii rajoittamaan kilpailua opposition vaalivoiton estämiseksi ja oman valtansa jatkuvuuden takaamiseksi, asettaa kilpailullisten vaalien järjestäminen näiden vaaliautokratioiden kohtalon loppukädessä äänestäjäkunnan ratkaistavaksi. Päättäessään antaa äänensä joko diktaattorille tai oppositiolle, yksittäiset äänestäjät tulevat täten määrittäneeksi vaalien kilpailullisuuden tason – eli diktaattorin ja hänen haastajiensa välisen voittomarginaalin – ja sen, onko vaalien lopputulos autoritäärisen hallinnon jatkuminen vai mahdollinen demokratisoitumisprosessi. Koska vaaleihin on kirjallisuudessa kuitenkin keskitytty lähinnä diktaattorin ja opposition näkökulmasta, on kysymys siitä, miten ja miksi heterogeeniset äänestäjät päätyvät erilaisiin äänestyspäätöksiin jäänyt lähes täysin vaille huomiota.

Pohjaten Beatriz Magalonin teoriaan äänestyskäyttäytymisestä vaaliautokratioissa, tässä työssä tutkitaan, kuinka äänestäjäkunnan sosio-demograafinen heterogeenisyys synnyttää ristiriitaisia preferenssejä, jotka johtavat erityyppiseen äänestäjäkäyttäytymiseen ja joko diktaattorin tai opposition tukemiseen, sekä mitä seuraamuksia tällä heterogeenisyydellä on vaalien kilpailullisuudelle kansallisella tasolla.

Tätä äänestäjäheterogeenisyyden ja vaalien kilpailullisuuden tason välistä yhteyttä testataan työssä empiirisesti satunnaisten vaikutusten malliin pohjaavalla regressioanalyysillä käyttäen paneeliaineistoa, joka kattaa kaikki kansallisella tasolla vuosien 1974 ja 2006 välisenä aikana järjestetyt kilpailulliset autoritääriset vaalit.

Analyysin pohjalta tutkimus päätyy siihen tulokseen, että äänestäjäkunnan heterogeenisyyden ja kilpailullisuuden tason välillä on systemaattinen yhteys, ja osoittaa, että äänestyspäätöstä parhaiten ennustaviin tekijöihin lukeutuvat äänestäjän etninen alkuperä ja tulotaso sekä yleinen talouskasvu. Näiden tulosten osoitetaan lisäksi pysyvän muuttumattomina kun analyysissä otetaan huomioon vaihtoehtoisia selitysmalleja edustavien diktaattorin ja opposition strategioiden vaikutus. Tutkimuksessa arvioidaan lopuksi näihin tutkimustuloksiin sisältyviä ongelmia sekä niiden laajempaa merkitystä vaaliautokratioiden ja kilpailullisuuden tutkimukselle.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
Vaaliautokratia, kilpailullisuus, äänestäjäheterogeenisyys, demokratisointi

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1. Introduction

When the third wave of democratisation (Huntington 1991) reached its culmination point in the *annus mirabilis* of 1989 and the Cold War came to an end, the prospects of global democracy seemed brighter than ever before. Yet today, some forty years after the wave first emerged, much of the optimism initially conveyed by these developments has been replaced by growing scepticism as scholars and politicians alike have been forced to face a reality rife – not with liberal democracies – but with protracted transitions, weak electoral democracies and, above all, a broad range of hybrid regimes, i.e. political regimes situated in a grey zone somewhere in-between the twin poles of autocracy and democracy (Gagné 2010, 5).

As the number of hybrid regimes has grown, so, too, has the literature endeavouring to identify the nature, strengths and weaknesses of these highly versatile regimes, ranging from delegative democracy (O'Donnell 1994) and defective democracy (Merkel, Puhle, and Croissant 2003) to semi-authoritarianism (Ottaway 2003) and post-totalitarianism (Linz and Stepan 1996). One of the most recent strings in this tradition has formed around a class of regimes christened *electoral authoritarian regimes* which are characterized by an intriguing contradiction: real electoral competition combined with a playing field so heavily and systematically skewed in favour of the incumbent that the regime nevertheless falls short of the procedural democratic minimum of free and fair elections (Levitsky and Way 2010a, 5; Schedler 2006, 3).

Although the literature on electoral authoritarianism is still largely in its infancy (Miller 2009, 5), it has already yielded some noteworthy insights into the dynamics and consequences of this potentially uneasy wedlock between democratic and autocratic elements. Accordingly, multiparty elections seem to have an auspicious effect on democratisation, and may also be inversely related to regime stability, thus violating the very rationale for holding authoritarian elections – prolonging the longevity of dictatorial rule. More importantly still, these patterns appear to be contingent upon a fairly high degree of electoral competitiveness, as elections marked by a dominant autocrat and a weak opposition appear instead to be indicative of little more than continued non-democratic rule (see Hadenius and Teorell 2007; Lindberg 2006; Roessler and Howard 2009).

This link between competitive authoritarian elections and regime outcomes is no trivial finding, inasmuch as it contradicts many conventional wisdoms in the field of com-

parative politics, such as the view of elite pacts constituting the prevailing mode of transitions to democracy (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986), or of hybrid regimes being inherently unstable systems (Huntington 1991, 137). Furthermore, this observation is also of more immediate practical importance since it could heavily influence the debate on democracy promotion and whether the "political approach" with its emphasis on elections is in fact the most efficient form of democracy assistance (Carothers 2009).

Despite the substantial theoretical and practical significance electoral competitiveness holds for the study of authoritarian regimes, then, the literature on electoral authoritarianism remains incomplete in a number of ways. For one thing, the field lacks conceptual and methodological rigour, with many studies exhibiting shortcomings that raise doubts about the robustness of their findings. More acutely, however, the existent theoretical corpus also reveals a pressing need for inquiries which – instead of taking the degree of electoral competitiveness as something externally given and concentrating on its consequences for a given regime's continued existence – seek to "dissect" the phenomenon and turn it into a dependent variable in its own right. Put more succinctly, the current focus on the "output" dimension of competition at the expense of its "input" dimension has left our understanding of what causes the all-important variation in the degree of competitiveness in the first place piecemeal and contradictious at best.

It is the contention of this thesis that much of the current confusion as concerns the "sources of competition" (Schedler 2009b) is not only, or even primarily, caused by difficulties in combining existent explanations, but by their overly constrained analytical scope. More specifically, the literature at large appears to be suffering from the omission of a very likely source of variation: by interpreting competitiveness as the outcome of a strategic game of power between the ruling dictator and the opposition, scholars have failed to fully appreciate the fact that authoritarian elections invariably involve a third player – *the voters* – whose preferences and behaviours are likely to influence the strategies of the two main actors, and thereby the degree of competitiveness.

The decision of most scholars to simply ignore the electorate or to treat it as a homogeneous monolith without a will of its own is problematic as it not only implies – ironically enough – that the way in which the voters choose to cast their ballots is trivial for the outcome of the election; it also blatantly disregards what appear to be significant and systematic differences in how voters with heterogeneous socio-demographic backgrounds choose their preferred candidate in the institutional setting of electoral autocracy. In consequence, the potential of the electorate to influence the electoral fortunes of

the dictator and the opposition by virtue of its particular socio-demographic composition remains virtually unexplored.

This lacuna in the literature forms the point of departure for this thesis as it sets out to probe the existence of a causal relationship between the degree of electoral competitiveness and voter heterogeneity across the universe of national-level elections held in electoral autocracies during the period 1974–2006. Although the focal point of the study consists of an investigation into the reasons that explain the voters' decision to either support or oppose continued dictatorial rule in line with Beatriz Magaloni's (2008) theory of voter behaviour and regime survival, the thesis concurrently also strives to address some of the other shortcomings in the literature by employing new data as well as more rigorous conceptualisations and methods, while also taking tentative steps towards bridging some of the existent theoretical strings.

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter two serves as an introduction to the by now quite substantial body of literature dealing with electoral authoritarianism and seeks to elucidate the logic of studying electoral competition in autocratic regimes. To this purpose, it first provides definitions of the central concepts used in the study before elaborating upon the link between the degree of competitiveness and regime stability, which provides the underlying motivation for the investigation at hand. The chapter then proceeds to evaluate competing theories of the determinants of competitiveness, and ends by developing an argument of why the voters as a collective of more or less heterogeneous actors ought to be taken into account in a more systematic manner, on the basis of which the actual research question is finally stated.

Chapter three is dedicated to Magaloni's (2008) theory of voter behaviour, which provides the theoretical underpinnings for the quantitative analysis carried out later in the thesis. This section first spells out the gist of Magaloni's argument, from which it then derives hypotheses that aim at probing the impact of voter heterogeneity on electoral competitiveness. The section closes with a discussion of the potential limitations of the theory when employed in a broader, more global context.

Chapter four is divided into two sections. The first one elucidates the choice of data as well as the operationalisation of the variables in preparation for the actual analysis. The latter section explores the method to be used in the study – a random effects regression analysis – and presents the regression models. Throughout the chapter, an effort is also made to consider some of the shortcomings that earlier studies display on the methodological front.

Chapter five presents the results from the regression analysis and reflects upon these in the light of Magaloni's (2008) theory. Finally, chapter six wraps up the study with a summary and considers the wider implications of its findings.

2. Electoral competitiveness in authoritarian regimes

The rulers of electoral autocracies stand before a formidable challenge. Unlike their colleagues in politically closed autocracies, they have adopted the language of democracy by establishing elections as the only lawful route to power, by introducing universal suffrage and by allowing rivalling parties to aspire to the highest national level offices at regular intervals. But because the institutionalisation of multiparty competition by necessity infuses the electoral process with a degree of uncertainty regarding its outcome, the autocrats suddenly find themselves faced with the new and very real threat of an opposition victory at the polls. Consequently, their remaining in power becomes dependent upon a skilfully performed balancing act between evoking genuine popular support and limiting de facto competitiveness under conditions of de jure unlimited competition through all means possible (Schedler 2009c, 293–294).

The attempt at reconciling the most fundamentally democratic trappings of all with substantially authoritarian outcomes is often doomed to failure as is demonstrated by the 2002 elections in Kenya, where the pro-democracy opposition parties were after two close runs finally able to bring down the long-standing regime of the Kenya National African Union (KANU). Yet, sometimes the endeavour to curb competitiveness without effectively suffocating it turns out to be a success, and a stable, albeit somewhat counterintuitive equilibrium emerges as the autocratic rulers go on winning overwhelmingly in spite of political alternatives existing, something the Singaporean People's Action Party (PAP) has continued to do since the inauguration of the country's self-government in 1959.

It is this dilemma of electoral competition, crystallised in the converse regime trajectories of Kenya and Singapore, that is to form the overarching theme of this thesis. Seeing that non-democratic elections produce very dissimilar regime outcomes depending on their level of competitiveness, how can this divergence in the margins of victory across the universe of structurally competitive authoritarian elections be accounted for? Why is competitiveness successfully bridled and domesticated in some electoral autocracies, while it turns into an unpredictable and counterproductive element in others?

Before any attempt at narrowing down this problem to a form more conducive to empirical testing can be made, however, we need to deepen our understanding of its nature. Consequently, it is the purpose of this chapter to paint a "broader picture" of the literature dealing with electoral competitiveness in autocratic regimes by first presenting

the conceptual foundation of the field, then moving on to explore the empirical and theoretical ties that link the level of competitiveness to processes of authoritarian stability and breakdown before surveying the plethora of explanations that seek to shed light on this variation. The chapter ends by formulating the actual research question on the basis of a discussion of the caveats these earlier efforts display.

2.1. The conceptual building blocks – defining the object of study

A logical first step in the endeavour to gain insight into what causes the degree of competitiveness to vary in structurally competitive authoritarian elections is to locate the phenomenon of interest within the broader conceptual framework of electoral authoritarian regimes that is to structure the consequent analysis.

The study of *political regimes* has long constituted one of the central fields of political science. Understood as institutionalised rules and procedures of a formal or informal nature that determine access to political power and to the making of publicly binding decisions (Geddes 1999, 16; Schmitter and Karl 1991, 76), scholars have since antiquity mapped the topography of regimes in varied typologies with the goal of explaining how different systems encourage certain types of behaviour among political actors, leading in consequence to diverging political outcomes and policies. In spite of this rich history, however, contemporary political science has largely come to operate within a dichotomy encompassing two opposite systems of governance. In the spirit of Hans Kelsen's (1925) distinction between autonomous and heteronomous norms, the basic regime types now consist of *democracy*, which is characterised by laws that are binding for the legislators and the addressees alike, and *autocracy*, where the lawgivers are exempted from adhering to the norms they draw up (Gandhi 2008a, 3–7; Merkel 2010a, 21–22).[1]

Although the analytical limelight in this thesis falls on the latter of these categories, we are, in the absence of a positive definition of autocracy, compelled to first specify democracy as a politological concept in order to grasp the characteristics of its negation – a task which, in stark contrast to the ease with which an etymological definition of democracy as "rule by the people" can be derived from the corresponding Greek nouns

[1] Kelsen draws on the logic of Machiavelli, who was the first to sort political regimes into two categories on the basis of who the rulers were – rule by the one or by the assembly – thus departing from the older Aristotelian tradition of a regime-triad consisting of *monarchy* (rule by the one), *aristocracy* (rule by the few) and *democracy* (rule by the many) (Gandhi 2008a, 7).

demos (δήμος) and kratein (κρατείν), belongs to the most perennial ones in all of political science (Dahl 1989, 14). The fierce debate on how to flesh out the abstract principle of the people's sovereignty has principally been confined to the realm of democratic theory, though, as the empirical branch of comparative politics habitually compromises on a minimalist and procedural view of political democracy for purposes of analytical clarity (Collier and Adcock 1999, 540). This notion delimits democracy exclusively to the political sphere and strips it of all traits that are "not indispensable for its identification" (Sartori 1976, 61), while heeding the institutional base of the regime as opposed to its substantial outcomes. By thus avoiding many of the perils that arise from using more maximalist and substantive concepts, the procedural minimum lends itself well to empirical inquiries. These perils include problems in establishing causality between an outcome of interest and a regime type in the presence of multiple defining dimensions; tainting the concept with tautologies and normative concerns; and the preclusion of theoretically interesting questions about the relationship between a system of governance and a given attribute, caused by the latter being incorporated into the definition of the former (Bernhagen 2009, 26; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010, 72–74; Gandhi 2008a, 8–9; Hadenius and Teorell 2004, 6–8; Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 7–14).

In line with these premises, the core-principle of democracy materialises in the shape of contested elections as is most plainly seen in Schumpeter's classic characterisation of democracy as a method for choosing the political decision-makers through "a competitive struggle for the peoples' vote" (Schumpeter 1994, 269). However, this definition has been accused of excessive minimalism (e.g. Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán 2001, 41–45), on account of which Dahl's (1971) more demanding concept of polyarchy or real type democracy has with some variations enjoyed considerable popularity in the field (see Krennerich 2002). Here, the dimension of contestation is supplemented with two additional attributes: universal participation and institutional guarantees in the form of political rights and civil liberties, which are to lend the elections democratic meaning (Berg-Schlosser 2004, 52; Dahl 1971, 1–9; Müller and Pickel 2007, 524).

Despite the general predilection for the Dahlian notion of democracy, this thesis continues in the Schumpeterian tradition and identifies contested elections that serve to fulfil governmental offices as the watershed separating democracy from autocracy (Alvarez et al. 1996, 4; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010, 69). This definition entails firstly that both the chief executive and the effective legislative body be elected, but for a given regime to truly qualify as "a system in which parties lose elections" (Przeworski

1991, 10), the electoral battle further needs to meet three criteria, namely *ex-ante uncertainty* as regards its outcome so that no actor can dictate the results beforehand; *ex-post irreversibility*, indicating that the winners of the election de facto ascend to power; and *repeatability*, meaning that the political mandate of the elected government is pro tempore only (Alvarez et al. 1996, 4–7; Przeworski et al. 2000, 15–18).

Why opt for the more parsimonious definition encompassing only contestation? Apart from its firm rooting in democracy theory, two further justifications bear mentioning. On the one hand, it can be argued that the dimension of participation has lost much of its original analytical saliency since the 1970s as universal suffrage has become the rule (Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán 2001, 43; Munck and Verkuilen 2002, 11). On the other, by including political rights and civil liberties in the definition of democracy, polyarchy ceases to be a strictly procedural definition inasmuch as the purpose of these rights is clearly to warrant a substantive outcome of the political process, viz. the political equity of voters (Dahl 1971, 2–3, 1989; Saward 1994, 13–14). This furthermore precludes any empirical investigation into the relationship between these rights and a given type of regime (Przeworski et al. 2000, 33–34). If we therefore follow the pragmatic advice of Collier and Adcock (1999), who urge us to adapt our concepts to the respective empirical dilemma we are seeking to illuminate instead of constructing concepts based on generic notions, usage of the purely electoral criteria of Przeworski et al. can be vindicated by their allowing for more flexibility in dealing with these rights as a variable in the empirical analysis that is to follow.[2]

As a consequence of this deliberation, we are now in a position to define autocracy as a system of governance in which the ruler – also termed autocrat or dictator – has attained power by means other than contested elections (Gandhi 2008a, 7). But just as the category "democracy" can, in order to distinguish between countries like the Philippines and Sweden, be divided further into *electoral democracy* and *liberal democracy*, where the former signifies the presence of the basic democratic institutions and the latter mirrors how these actually work in view of such qualitative democratic ideals as freedom, accountability and rule of law (Hadenius and Teorell 2004, 8–10), so, too, has

[2] Such generic notions seem to underlie Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán's harsh criticism of Alvarez et al.'s (1996) "subminimal definition", which by excluding civil liberties fails to reflect democracy "as that word is understood in the modern world" (Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán 2001, 40–41).

autocracy been analytically fine-tuned with the help of subtypes that it may better capture the many nuances of non-democratic rule.

The most classical disaggregation is arguably that by Juan Linz, who distinguishes between *authoritarianism* and *totalitarianism* on the basis of three dimensions.[3] Linz interprets the former as a system that allows limited political pluralism, draws legitimacy from distinct mentalities such as nationalism, and lacks popular mobilisation, whereas he regards the latter to be characterised by a monistic society and an all-encompassing ideology combined with intensive and extensive mobilisation efforts (Linz 1975, 2000).[4] But while this set of criteria and the seven-fold typology of authoritarian regimes it laid the foundation for speak of Linz's deep empirical knowledge of non-democratic regimes, its utility is reduced considerably by analytical inconsistencies and idiosyncrasies that originate from the lack of systematic criteria on which to base the dimensions and to identify graduations within these (Brooker 2000, 22–29; Gandhi 2008a, 8; Merkel 2010a, 41–42). Not surprisingly, the old demarcation between authoritarianism and totalitarianism is increasingly being abandoned in more recent taxonomies, which display a much reduced degree of complexity in their approach to classify non-democratic regimes singly based on their modus of power maintenance (e.g. Gandhi 2008a; Geddes 1999). In keeping with these newer typological developments, "authoritarianism" is in the remainder of this thesis used interchangeably with "autocracy" and "non-democracy".

It is in this newer tradition that we may pigeonhole the typology of electoral authoritarianism as originally devised by Levitsky and Way (2002), Diamond (2002) and Schedler (2002a, 2002b). This taxonomy categorises political regimes according to the nature of their national-level popular elections that serve as the route to power, and crystallises in this fashion three different types of systems as illustrated in Figure 2.1. On the right-hand side of the spectrum, one detects electoral and liberal democracies, which both feature contested elections and are therefore grouped together despite their differences with regard to the deepening of democracy. When crossing over to the non-

[3] Initially, a fourth dimension was included, namely the exercise of power, which in authoritarian regimes took place within limits that are "formally ill-defined […] but actually quite predictable", as compared to the omnipotent claim to power of the totalitarian fuehrer or party (Linz 1970, 255).

[4] Totalitarianism was originally considered to constitute a sui generis regime type beside democracy and has been the subject of intense theorisation (e.g. Arendt 2004, Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965). However, because the number of empirical cases to which the concept could reasonably be attached has steadily dwindled in the course of the twentieth century, totalitarianism is now typically subsumed under the larger analytical category of autocracy as a subtype alongside authoritarianism (Brooker 2000, chapter 1).

democratic side, one in turn finds at the left-hand extreme a heterogeneous group of non-competitive regimes termed *politically closed autocracies*. These systems either dispense with elections altogether in favour of allocating power through, for instance, military orders or royal lineage as is the practice in Saudi-Arabia, or like Cuba, organise single-party elections in which opposition parties are not allowed to run (Howard and Roessler 2006, 366–367).[5]

Figure 2.1. *Disaggregation of political regimes using electoral criteria*

Closed autocracy		Electoral authoritarianism		Democracy
Non-electoral autocracy	*Single-party autocracy*	*Hegemonic autocracy*	*Competitive autocracy*	*Electoral and liberal democracy*
No elections	Non-competitive elections	Low competitiveness	High competitiveness	Contested elections

Source: Schedler (2009c); Howard and Roessler (2006).

Finally, in the middle of the spectrum one encounters the category *electoral authoritarianism*, which on closer inspection turns out to be made out of a certain kind of *hybrid regimes* – a term which, in its broadest sense, denotes systems that mix democratic features with authoritarian ones, but which are still sufficiently stable so as not to qualify as transitional, falling hence somewhere in a grey zone between the twin ideal regime types (Gagné 2010, 7; Krennerich 2002, 59–60). As the term "electoral authoritarianism" implies, however, hybrids are seldom treated as a regime type sui generis (but see Lauth 2002; Morlino 2009; Rüb 2002); instead, they are attached to the established dichotomy with the help of adjectives as diminished subtypes, viz. as incomplete instances of either the democratic or autocratic root concept (Collier and Levitsky 1997, 437–438).[6] What hides behind this particular label is a compilation of regimes which

[5] This approach has been criticised by Snyder (2006) and Hadenius and Teorell (2007) on the grounds that especially the category of politically closed regimes masks important qualitative differences between autocratic regimes, for example, as concerns the degree of stateness by lumping together cases as distinctly different as Somalia and North Korea.

[6] The popularity of this strategy has mainly found expression in an unfortunate inflation of "adjectivised" ad hoc regime types that seek to describe the missing feature of an otherwise democratic or authoritarian

use a nominally democratic institution – multiparty elections with universal franchise – to serve the acquirement of power at the national level, but at the same time subvert the electoral process so systematically and severely in favour of the incumbent autocrat that they cannot be considered democratic (Levitsky and Way 2010a, 5–6; Schedler 2006, 5).[7] This indicates that while elections in electoral autocracies fall short of contestation as the dictator can use illicit means not open to democratic rulers to secure his victory, by allowing multiple parties to run they nonetheless differ from single-party elections by enabling competition and competitiveness, the latter of which can be used to divide electoral authoritarianism further into the subtypes of *hegemonic* and *competitive authoritarian regimes*.[8]

The typology of electoral autocracy in other words aims at identifying authoritarian regimes that organise competitive elections and thus enable competitiveness. But what exactly does this mean? If we follow Hyde and Marinov (2010) and Strom (1989), who expand on the seminal work of Giovanni Sartori (1976), competition and competitiveness can be understood as two interlinked dimensions of the electoral struggle between political parties for votes and office. In its original wording, *competition* is defined as the structural prerequisite for such a struggle – in less cryptic terms, it can be thought of as the rules of the game that engender the possibility of a competitor entering the political market and winning over the voters (ibid., 217–221; see also Strom 1989, 278–279). However, since Sartori's original definition conflates competition with contestation and thus renders it a defining feature of democracy, this thesis employs the concept as modified by Hyde and Marinov to also encompass non-democratic polities by disregarding the notion that for us to be able to speak of competition, the elections must constitute a

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system without relating it to a larger taxonomy (Bogaards 2009, 400–401; Collier and Levitsky 1997, 450–451). In laying the foundation for a novel regime typology, the literature on electoral authoritarianism is in other words somewhat exceptional, although not entirely unique – for an example of a typology of diminished subtypes operating with a democratic root concept, see the literature on defective democracies (Merkel et al. 2003; Merkel 2004), and for an interesting proposition of a double-root strategy combining these two hybrid typologies Bogaards (2009).

[7] Especially Levitsky and Way (2002, 54–57) have argued that the concept of electoral authoritarianism be expanded to also encompass other institutions such as the legislative and the judiciary. Nevertheless, even their analysis is delimited to the principal arena of contestation, i.e. the elections (see also Schedler 2009a, 387, 2010a, 71–76).

[8] The threshold separating hegemonic regimes from competitive ones is often operationalised as the incumbent winning at least 65–75 per cent of the vote (Diamond 2002; Roessler and Howard 2008) or an absolute majority in parliament (Greene 2010; Reuter and Gandhi 2011). However, seeing that this practice violates the logic of regime classification – fluctuating electoral outcomes are no indicator of changes having occurred in the institutional features that define the system – I utilise these subcategories not as analytical entities in the strict sense, but rather as hermeneutic tools for structuring the argument.

free and fair battle between equals.[9] In this vein, competition is considered to exist when the electoral rules allow for opposition, there is more than one party and the voters have a choice between at least two candidates on the ballot, regardless of how unfair the contest, how distorted the principle of electoral uncertainty, and how unlikely the event of a challenger running and triumphing may otherwise be (Hyde and Marinov 2010, 6).

In keeping with the economic analogy, competition as a structure accordingly signalises the existence of a political market with the potential of bringing about an alternation in power. Yet, this alone tells us nothing about how well the market really operates and whether the competitors succeed in actualising the potential of competition. For this, a second behavioural dimension is clearly called for, and *competitiveness* can thus be defined as a function of the influence which the contestants – with or without foul play – exert on the choices of voters and thereby on the election results. Competitiveness in other words emerges as the measurable outcome of interparty competition, and may in this capacity vary between two extremes. On the one hand, there is the "low-competitiveness" of hegemonic regimes, where the ruling party gains an overwhelming victory or even runs unopposed, and, on the other, the "high-competitiveness" of competitive authoritarian regimes with a nearly even distribution of strength and thin margins that leave the incumbent autocrat only a hairsbreadth away from defeat, or even force him to step down should the opposition challenger succeed in overtaking him (Hyde and Marinov 2010, 6–7; Sartori 1976, 217–221; Strom 1989, 278–279).

With this, we begin to have an overview of the theoretical territory that is to be covered in the thesis and, equipped with this conceptual roadmap, may now move on to investigate our beast in its natural habitat.

2.2. The empirical background – competitiveness and regime outcomes

"Typologies are *instrumental* in the research process: they are 'functional' in the sense that they have been constructed to be useful in the research process." Although this observation was made by McKinney (1969, 3, emphasis in the original) more than forty years ago, it has lost nothing of its validity, and one may hence safely presuppose that

[9] Interestingly enough, Hyde and Marinov fail to explicitly mention that they undertake such a drastic alteration of Sartori's concept (see Hyde and Marinov 2010, 6–7).

the taxonomy on electoral authoritarianism with its focus on competitiveness has been devised in order to facilitate the analysis of some empirical phenomenon. Before seeking to shed light on the factors that account for variance in the degree of competitiveness, one might thus stop and ask why fluctuations in the margins of victory are of importance for the study of authoritarian regimes in the first place.

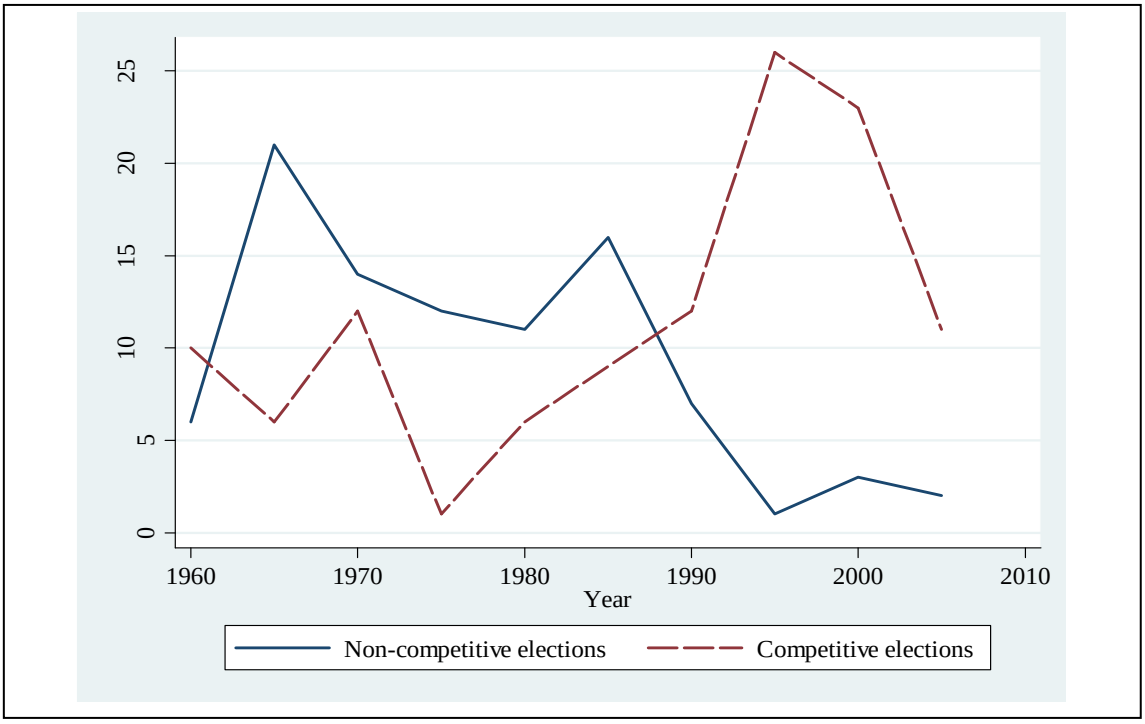
In the light of the previous sections, it requires little skill to deduce that electoral competitiveness gains salience in the context of autocracy because it reveals something about the likelihood of an alternation in power occurring. To use a more exact terminology, it reveals something about the *stability* of an electoral authoritarian regime as well as about its propensity to *democratise*: if the ruling autocrat wins by a comfortable margin, his rule can be considered consolidated, but if he loses due to heightened competitiveness and subsequently steps down, the criteria of contestation as stated earlier are fulfilled and the regime is considered to have undergone a transition to democracy. This link to regime outcomes suggests, then, that the investigation into the essence, workings and consequences of competitiveness under autocratic rule is logically a part of the broader field of democratisation studies, which explores the sources of regime stability and instability. Yet, it only constitutes one of its most recent branches; indeed, studies of competitiveness were to remain scarce and sporadic well into the 1990s.

The fact that political scientists proved sluggish in making the connection between competitiveness and regime outcomes may appear confounding when viewed against the backdrop of the empirical and academic developments that the so-called third wave of democratisation (Huntington 1991) gave rise to with its global surge in regime transitions from autocracy to democracy, unleashed by the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 1974 (Lindberg 2009b, 7–8).[10] On the one hand, the wave was from the very beginning accompanied by a slow but steady increase in the number of competitive authoritarian elections, as shown by Figure 2.2. On the other, the wave gave birth to a strong

[10] A wave of democratisation is defined by Huntington (1991, 15–16) as "a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time". He goes on to identify three waves of democratisation – the first (1828–1926), the second (1943–1962) and the third (1974–) – and two reverse waves – the first (1922–1942) and the second (1958–1975) – "in which some but not all of the countries that had previously made the transition to democracy revert[…] to nondemocratic rule" (ibid.). The third wave is considered to have been the largest and most global in scope: between 1987 and 2006 alone, the amount of electoral democracies (operationalised as regimes scoring < 2 on the Freedom House *or* ≥ 6 on the Polity IV index) grew from 25 to 62, which translates into a whopping increase of almost 150 per cent (Roessler and Howard 2009, 112).

phase of theoretical expansion in the literature on authoritarian regimes, as the accelerating diffusion of democracy across large parts of Southern Europe, Latin America and Asia in the course of the 1970s and 1980s engendered a heightened need to illuminate the mechanisms driving regime breakdown and democratisation (Lindberg 2009b, 7–8).

Figure 2.2. *Authoritarian elections, 1960-2005*



Source: Hyde and Marinov (2010); Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010); calculations by the author.

That competitiveness did not rise to the analytical forefront as a consequence of these processes can be accounted for by three factors. Firstly, one can discern a general disinterest in authoritarian elections caused by the paradoxical inclination of electoral studies to view non-democratic elections as something of an oxymoron for failing to perform the same tasks as their democratic counterparts. As a consequence, authoritarian elections were dismissed as meaningless "window-dressing" (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007, 1292), i.e. as the effort of dictators to erect a democratic façade for purposes of regime legitimation (Gandhi 2008a, xix–xx; Hermet 1978, 1–10).

Secondly, in spite of the already mentioned incremental increase in the number of electoral autocracies, overlooking this variation in authoritarian elections is likely to have been facilitated by the relative scarcity of competitive elections on the autocratic side of the regime divide (Diamond 2002, 23–24). Authoritarian elections are of course per se neither a new nor a rare phenomenon. After all, many European and American

rulers were holding less-than-democratic elections already in the eighteenth century, with national-level elections having been a nearby ubiquitous feature of authoritarian regimes since at least the 1970s (Hermet, Rose, and Rouquié 1978, vii–viii; Schedler 2010a, 69).[11] Furthermore, amongst these highly diverse electoral battles – organised with varying regularity at different levels of government, under different rules and for different offices with varying powers – one recurrently finds both competitive specimen as well as instances which are better described as unequivocally non-competitive exercises in outlawing, imprisoning and annihilating the opposition (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 404; Schedler 2009c, 293). Notwithstanding the fact, then, that contemporary electoral autocracies have progenitors in systems such as Mexico under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and Senegal under the Senegalese Socialist Party (PSS), the forty-five years of oscillation in the global number of national-level authoritarian elections allowing for interparty competition as compared to non-competitive elections, depicted in Figure 2.2, show the former group to have constituted a minority throughout most of the covered period, with a steep increase having occurred only after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.[12]

Thirdly and lastly, electoral competition did not fit the research agenda that quickly came to dominate the expanding field of regime studies. As such, the idea that authoritarian elections might stimulate and affect the course of regime breakdowns and democratisation was not entirely alien to the literature, as some earlier contributions had already explored this possibility with regard to the first two waves of democratisation (see Dahl 1971; Rustow 1970). With the growth of "transitology" in the 1970s, this earlier tradition in fact made some scholars come alive to the role of elections in regime transitions. Most notably, the edited volume of Hermet, Rose and Rouquié (1978) featured pioneering studies that persuasively argued the effects of "elections without choice" on autocratic stability and instability to be contingent upon their degree of competitiveness as a mirror of the underlying balance of power between political actors.

Yet, their notion of electoral competition as the engine of these processes met with little sympathy in the broader field. The fact of the matter is that, with the seminal defi-

[11] In the year 2008, for example, only six of the world's 172 independent states with a population over 500,000 did not organise direct national-level elections. These six countries include China, Eritrea, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Somalia (Hyde and Marinov 2009, 1).

[12] If expressed numerically, this means that while some 8.6 competitive elections were organised annually between 1980 and 1989, the global average roughly doubled to 17.5 between 1990 and 1999 (Hyde and Marinov 2010; Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland 2010; calculations by the author).

nition of a regime transition as introduced by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986) and as employed by Przeworski (1991, 1992), the causal weight in transition studies increasingly fell on the strategic pacting of divided government and opposition elites. Originally denoting a movement *from authoritarianism*, whose outcome was seen to be contingent upon the existent constellation of actors, a transition was now understood as a movement *toward democracy* in which the rulers' decision to open up the regime politically unleashed a "slippery slope" (Brownlee 2009a, 131) that led in a quasi-mechanical fashion first to the establishment, and then to the consolidation of democracy. In this analysis, which saw in non-democratic elections nothing but a sign of an ongoing liberalisation, electoral competition was helplessly left to play second fiddle (ibid., 130–132; Carothers 2002, 7–8; see also Lindberg 2009b, 2–3; Merkel 2010a, 66–67).[13]

In sum, the bulk of the literature traditionally either ignored electoral competition in autocracies or construed it as an index of political instability, causing hybrid regimes displaying this feature to be classified as inherently volatile systems pending democratisation. Yet, this "transition paradigm" (Carothers 2002) began to appear progressively dubious in the course of the 1990s. As the number of autocracies holding competitive elections skyrocketed in connection with the third wave peaking in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, this set in motion two developments that ultimately forced scholars to rethink the role of elections and competitiveness in authoritarian regimes.

Firstly, while some of these newly materialised electoral hybrids did live up to existent theories by crossing over the regime divide to become democracies, this seemed suddenly to occur through qualitatively unprecedented transitions. Contrary to established scholarly wisdom, political negotiations and previous regime types appeared irrelevant here as growing numbers of autocrats were forced to relinquish power in the wake of a series of gradually more competitive elections that ended in an opposition victory. Secondly, scholars were beginning to realise that to treat electoral hybrids as "democracies with adjectives" (Collier and Levitsky 1997) moving slowly toward popular rule by virtue of their competitive elections, might constitute nothing short of an

[13] Although the methodological pluralism of the transition literature increased in the 1990s to also include system and structuralist theories, taking into account, amongst other things, such factors as the level of modernisation (Przeworski et al. 2000; Boix and Stokes 2003), class-structures (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens and Stephens 1992), and previous regimes types (Linz and Stepan 1996), these developments did not raise elections to the forefront of the analysis (Lindberg 2009b, 2; see also Merkel 2010a, 67–89).

"electoral fallacy" (Karl 1986, 1995), as many of these systems turned out to be defying established theories in an even more fundamental way by stubbornly refusing transition. Instead, they seemed to induce the third wave to begin showing signs of ebbing by evolving into stable "autocracies with adjectives" in which the elections continued to translate into sustained non-democratic rule as the impotent opposition watched the autocrat go on winning with impressive vote-margins (Brownlee 2009a, 130–131; Diamond 2002, 23–24; Lindberg 2009b, 2; McFaul 2002).[14]

In the guise of these transitions and the distension of the grey zone between democracy and autocracy that saw the proportion of non-democratic regimes organising multiparty elections rise from some 30 per cent to over 70 per cent between 1990 and 2000 (Reuter and Gandhi 2011, 88), scholars were presented with circumstantial evidence suggesting that electoral competition might have a more active role to play in processes of regime perpetuation and breakdown than previously thought.[15] By the turn of the millennium, a growing number of studies accordingly began to hypothesise about a relationship between regime outcomes and the degree of electoral competitiveness that eventually laid the foundation for the literature on electoral authoritarianism.

This association has since become the central object of study within this field, with the majority of studies now attesting to the utility of distinguishing between the autocratic regimes of the third wave on the basis of electoral criteria. The thesis of elections as "a new mode of transition" (Lindberg 2009b) is thus supported, for example, by the cross-national quantitative inquiries of Miller (2010b), Hadenius and Teorell (2007), as well as Howard and Roessler (2006; Roessler and Howard 2009), who all find a positive association between democratisation and competitive authoritarian regimes, as opposed to hegemonic and closed authoritarian regimes. Howard and Roessler additionally discover that a high level of competitiveness not merely increases the likelihood of further liberalisation and democratisation, but also facilitates regime breakdown, which Bunce and Wolchik's (2009) analysis of Eastern Europe seconds.

Moreover, scholars are beginning to understand the causal mechanisms that lurk behind these correlations. As Miller summarises (2010a, 4–6), competitive elections may

[14] It remains disputed whether or not this movement indicates a change of tide and the beginning of the predicted authoritarian reverse wave (compare e.g. Diamond 2008; Merkel 2010b).

[15] Of these multiparty autocracies measured using data by Przeworski et al. (2000), the proportion of hegemonic regimes (when the criterion is an absolute majority in the legislative) equals some 60 per cent (Reuter and Gandhi 2011, 88).

work toward these ends through the actual outcome of political competition itself (Tucker 2007); by helping actors to overcome collective action problems, as witnessed in many electoral revolutions (Bunce and Wolchik 2010; Lindberg 2009a; Schedler 2002b, 2010b); and by spreading a democratic culture, thus raising electoral standards over time (Bunce and Wolchik 2006, 9; Lindberg 2006, 2009a).

Turning to the problem of explaining "authoritarianism in an age of democratization" (Brownlee 2007), several large-N studies show elections to be much more than merely compatible with authoritarian rule – they in fact actively prolong the longevity of non-democratic regimes (Geddes 2006; Roessler and Howard 2009; Schedler 2009c, 297–299, see also Geddes 1999). Nevertheless, the level of competitiveness appears again to make all the difference: as far as endurance goes, hegemonic authoritarian regimes lose to their non-competitive single-party cousins but have the upper hand over their more competitive counterparts (Cox 2009; Schedler 2009c, 297–299); a point seconded by a set of qualitative case studies on Mexico (Greene 2007; Magaloni 2008), Egypt (Blaydes 2008; Koehler 2008) and Jordan (Lust-Okar 2006, 2009b).

The "regime subverting" and "regime sustaining" (Schedler 2009c, 291) powers of competitive authoritarian elections have, however, also been subject to scepticism. Thus, Brownlee (2009a, 2009b) finds no such effects, although competitive authoritarian regimes in his analyses seem to harbour a heightened probability of being succeeded by a democratic regime. In their study of Latin America, McCoy and Hartlyn (2009) uncover a more mixed picture, with elections sometimes contributing to democratisation processes and sometimes not. Furthermore, although this discrepancy in the findings may still at least partly be passed off as a function of the respective authors' diverging choices regarding conceptualisation and operationalisation, there is some concern that the findings of some contributions might in fact be compromised on a more fundamental methodological level by a flawed universe of cases (Bogaards 2007, see also chapter four in this thesis). Simultaneously, especially the theorem of competition as contributing to democratisation – and not just regime breakdown – has on theoretical grounds been found to be vulnerable to charges of endogeneity, seeing that it is very difficult to warrant for causality and its direction in the context of general liberalisation and democratisation. In a word, we cannot exclude the possibility that "elections may characterize democratization without necessarily causing it" (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 415–416).

While the matter of the relationship between electoral competition and regime outcomes is subsequently far from settled, the bulk of the research nevertheless speaks

clearly for the significance of the degree of competitiveness as an indicator of regime stability and breakdown – albeit maybe not of democratisation – and the challenge now becomes to explain this divergence. To this we turn in the following.

2.3. The theoretical debate – explaining the logic of electoral competition

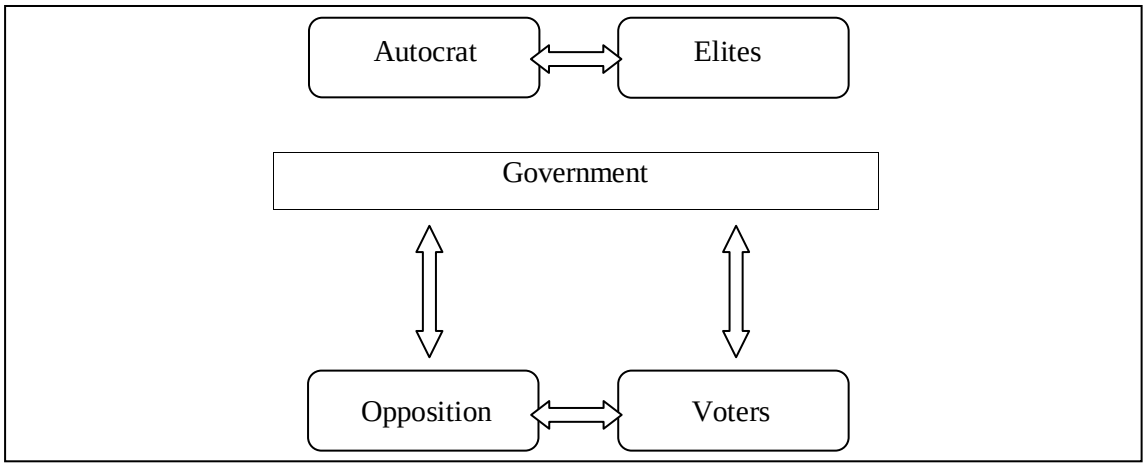
When attempting to account for variation in the degree of competitiveness, the very nature of the dependent variable suggests employing a framework that derives its explanatory power from developments at the micro-level of analysis. Not surprisingly, then, the mode of analysis par préférence in studying the logic of competitive authoritarian elections has been rational choice theory-oriented new institutionalism (Lindberg 2009a, 317–318). The gist of this approach is to focus on outcomes as the product of a strategic interaction between instrumentally rational and utility-maximising actors within a given institutional setting. Institutions gain momentum insofar as they can be utilised to mould the strategic game through which the self-reflecting actors pursue their interests. Institutions thus not only constitute the game and its players, but also constrain the behaviour of the latter by creating selective incentives and punishments that condition their choices, capabilities and beliefs. In this vein, institutional structures over time reduce uncertainty in complex and impersonal social situations by giving birth to self-sustaining conventions of political interaction that contribute to the maintenance of certain equilibria (Carey 2000, 738; Lindberg 2009a, 317–318; North 1990, 3–6).

From this, it logically follows that the way in which elections are structured carries momentous implications for how and why actors play the electoral game. Contested elections, for instance, are intended to provide a universally accepted and respected regulatory framework for gaining temporary control over the state and its policies, and feed peaceful interparty competition by inducing political groupings to fight for votes, but to also accept defeat and turn into parliamentary opposition (Levitsky and Way 2010a, 29).[16] Non-competitive elections, in contrast, are designed to quench political competition over power and to enforce the status quo. In this instance, elections emerge as an alternative to repression and terror in making up for the autocrat's lack of democratic legitimacy – they in other words help the dictator to overcome the two perennial

[16] Here, parties are thought to play the electoral game in order to maximise their vote-shares because only an electoral victory unlocks the many advantages of holding office. This idea, put forth forcefully by Downs (1965), is not universally accepted, though (see e.g. Strom 1990; Harmel and Janda 1994).

problems of all self-appointed rulers, namely that of soliciting *compliance* on the part of the elites and the population so as not to risk a palace coup or a rebellion, and that of encouraging their *cooperation* in order to generate the funds necessary for maintaining his structures of power through taxes, savings and labour.[17] Elections serve this purpose by offering a mechanism for channelling the conflicting interests of the dictator's peers and subjects into a contest over access to government spoils and graft rather than into one over access to state power, enabling the autocrat thus to create vested interests in the survival of the regime (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Darden 2008; Gandhi 2008a, xvii–xviii; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Schedler 2009d, 4–5; Wintrobe 2007, 366).[18]

Figure 2.3. *The actor-constellation of competitive authoritarian elections*



The institutional blueprint of electoral authoritarian regimes unites these two structures by positing elections as being constitutive of a game that grants the actors depicted in Figure 2.3 – the (de jure) elected government, the opposition, and the voters – legitimate roles in the process of exchanging state power competitively for votes, and as serving the interests of the autocrat as a tailor-made tool for warranting regime perpetuation.[19] By doing so, it traps the actors in an institutional limbo that lends competi-

[17] Again, although dictators are driven by a number of different ambitions (see Wintrobe 2007, 363–364), it is assumed that the first and foremost objective of any autocrat (and of his challengers) is to hold office, since this is a precondition for attaining any variety of other goals (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, 7).

[18] While it is now widely believed that the rationale for holding authoritarian elections is the perpetuation of the dictator's tenure, it does not follow that elections are originally instituted with this particular purpose in mind. In fact, an attempt to unravel the reason for holding non-democratic elections by "reading backwards" from their current functions approaches functionalism, as Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009, 407) rightfully point out in their article. It appears more fruitful to instead assume that, although elections may be instituted for various reasons, they all tend to generate very similar political dynamics and outcomes in the long run due to the similar institutional constraints they put in place (ibid.).

[19] The introduction of multiparty competition rests uneasily with the notion of elections as tool for regime reproduction and cannot yet fully be explained by comparativists. While some scholars offer a general

tive authoritarian elections their characteristic nature as *two-level games*, that is, as two interdependent strategic battles between the incumbent and the opposition, firstly over votes, and secondly over the institutional rules of the game (Schedler 2006, 12, 2009b, 180; see also Tsebelis 1990). This ambivalence is capable of stimulating very different political dynamics, causing some electoral autocracies ultimately to emerge out of this cross-fire of enabling and constraining institutional impetuses as hegemonic, while others evolve into the competitive subtype.

2.3.1. The equilibrium of hegemonic authoritarianism

For an autocrat who enters competitive elections with the goal of maintaining his power and thwarting the efforts of the opposition to topple the current system in favour of a new democratic or autocratic order, the "Open sesame!" that unlocks the door to the benefits of elections is an overwhelming victory at the polls. But how can such a low level of competitiveness be achieved and maintained? The answer lies, to paraphrase Beatriz Magaloni's (2008, 16) extension of an argument by Barbara Geddes (1999), in the dictator succeeding in establishing a behavioural equilibrium, where both the elites and masses find it to be in their interest to support the regime, and the opposition is domesticated to play along without questioning the rules of the game. The autocrat usually has plentiful opportunities to strike such a balance by virtue of his incumbent advantage, endowed by his relatively discretionary control over the twin apparatuses of state and coercion (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 407), which scholars view as being instrumental to three broad, and to some extent substitutive strategies, namely *co-optation*, *repression*, and *institutional manipulation*.[20]

Co-optation using politicised public resources is often marked down as the single most important tactic to affect the level of competitiveness (Greene 2010, 808). Here, elections are instrumental in that they help the dictator, first, to identify his strongholds among the electorate, and, second, to institutionalise political business circles (Blaydes

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explanation to this paradox by referring to the functionalist requirements of individual rulers (Gandhi and Przeworski 2009; Miller 2009), the recent proliferation of such elections is usually explicated with historically contingent factors, viz. the strongly pro-democratic political climate of the post-Cold War era that rendered closed authoritarianism more costly and induced dictators to establish pseudo-democratic institutions for legitimation purposes (Schedler 2009c, 298–299; Levitsky and Way 2010, 16–19).

[20] It is worth noting that many of these strategies are also employed in democracies, the difference being, however, that they in the case of electoral authoritarian regimes serve to distort the game so severely that a turnover in power is nearly unforeseeable (Pepinsky 2007, 142).

2006a; Pepinsky 2007) through which government spoils and patronage are distributed as jobs, land and public services to loyal minions, while they are withdrawn from defectors as punishment for their having dared to cast a ballot in favour of an opposition candidate (Greene 2010, 812; Lust-Okar 2006; Roessler and Howard 2008, 13). Correspondingly, elections may aid the dictator to reinforce his government by providing crucial information on which of the notables count as powerful enough to necessitate co-opting (Boix and Svolik 2007, 3–4; Malesky and Schuler 2010). In contrast to appointments, elections also contribute to the solving of intra-elite commitment problems by offering the notables a fair and regularised mechanism for gaining a share of the spoils and promotions on the basis of one's electoral performance (Blaydes 2008; Langston 2002). Elections are thus a prime instrument for the dictator to not only lower the costs of patronage, but to also obviate what in empirical light must be considered his most serious peril, viz. an intra-elite split (Geddes 1999, 2006; O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986). Moreover, vote buying and pork barrel politics deprive the opposition of voters and potential candidates in the form of defectors, but typically also divest the challengers of independent sources of finance by expanding the public sector at the expense of the more independent private sector, which, as demonstrated by the Social Democratic Front in Cameroon and the Semangat '46 in Malaysia, often proves fatal to opposition parties (Greene 2010, 812; Levitsky and Way 2010a, 62; Lust-Okar 2009b, 23; Roessler and Howard 2008, 13).[21]

While comparativists have long emphasised the second alternative, repression, as a frequently employed tool for societal and political control (see Arendt 2004; Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965), younger contributions tend to acknowledge that raising the costs of supporting the opposition by means of unlawful incarcerations, extrajudicial killings and other violations of civil rights is prone to have unintended and counterproductive consequences (see Wintrobe 2007), which might explain why state-organised violence seems to constitute something of a last resource in hegemonic systems. This is not to say that hegemonic regimes are a "tea party" (Castañeda quoted in Magaloni 2008, 10) – the threat of repression is certainly omnipresent, but the overall use of coercion is in the presence of well-working co-optation mechanisms likely to remain relatively spo-

[21] In this, the literature on electoral authoritarianism goes against the basic assumptions of classical coalition theory, which holds minimally winning coalitions to be the most rational tactic in distributive zero-sum games (see Riker 1962).

radic and targeted by nature, as the regime can rely on spoils by way of buttressing its political dominance (Greene 2010, 812; Levitsky and Way 2010b, 61; Magaloni 2008, 10–11; Roessler and Howard 2008, 11–12).

Lastly, dictators can pick and choose from their variegated "menu of manipulation" (Schedler 2002a) in order to tamper with the balance of power before, during, and after the elections. Being normally highly idiosyncratic and ad hoc-type of measures (Roessler and Howard 2008, 14), an attempt at summarizing the vast literature tracking this rich panoply of strategies must be renounced in favour of some stylised facts. Nevertheless, many of these manipulative measures take the shape of institutional engineering, where particular rules concerning ballot access, vote thresholds and state subsidies are altered to the disadvantage of the opposition. This may entail an introduction of arbitrary rules directed at hindering the coalescence of opponent forces by banning individual parties and candidates, as illustrated by the fate of opposition candidate Alassane Ouattara, who in 1994 was disqualified from running in Cote d'Ivoire on the grounds of his parents having been born abroad (ibid.; Schedler 2002a, 42).

Alternatively, dictators may change the type of electoral system being used, with majoritarian systems often thought to benefit the regime candidates more than proportional representation by creating incentives for coalescence among the elites – a common stratagem in Egyptian legislative elections during the Mubarak era (Norris 2009; Posusney 2002, 44; but see Magaloni 2008, 235) – or take to gerrymandering as in Jordan, where redistricting plays a significant role in perpetuating the political underrepresentation of the Palestinian minority (Lust-Okar 2009b, 23–25). In addition, the incumbent government may bias news flows in support of its candidates, while simultaneously limiting the public visibility of its opponents (Roessler and Howard 2008, 11; Schedler 2002a, 43–44). In this, state-owned media empires are obviously the most apt tools, but as the case of Malaysia under the rule of the Barisan Nasional demonstrates, even privately owned media outlets can be made to perform this task with the help of corruption and other illicit means (Levitsky and Way 2010a, 11).

Last but not least, dictators are frequently involved in more clandestine affairs classified as electoral fraud. As scholars have invented ingenious ways in which to study this covert but ubiquitous phenomenon, the picture that is emerging of forged voters' IDs, stuffed ballot boxes and falsified results on election day is that vote fabrication tends to shape the electoral outcome to a much lesser degree than one might be tempted to think, with fraud being decisive only in close elections (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 413; Le-

houcq 2003, 252; Lust-Okar 2009b, 21). That hegemonic regimes subsequently do not appear to rest upon ballot rigging may again be explained by co-optation being the preferred modus operandi, seeing how fraud – if and when detected – is capable of eroding the credibility of the electoral institution and spurring electoral protests, rendering the potential costs it may inflict much higher than those arising from the maintenance of patronage relations (Lehoucq 2003, 249; Pepinsky 2007, 141–142).

The three broad strategies delineated here obviously hold no guarantee of victory, for even if the dictator is in control of ample funds, guns and newspapers, the effect of these measures still depends upon the obedience and dexterity of his operative subordinates (Schedler 2009b, 182–183; Way 2005, 2006). But to the extent that they do serve their purpose, these mechanisms enable the dictator to forge a unified government that benefits from "genuine" popular support by enticing voters and elites to espouse economic thinking in the literal sense of the word (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 408–410).

How, then, does this affect the behaviour of the opposition, the other key actor of the elections? Thinking back to the structure of electoral competition under autocracy as a two-level game, challengers in hegemonic systems clearly face an uphill battle at the game level of elections that is difficult to win by engaging electoral campaigns. They still have two strategies at their disposal at the meta-level of institutional change, though: to either *boycott* the elections or to mobilise the voters to *protest* against the autocrat's handling of the elections (Schedler 2006, 14). Both require a fairly high degree of opposition coordination and party-internal cohesion to work, however, which is difficult to achieve in the light of ideological differences between parties and the strategic dilemmas these stratagems entail (see van de Walle 2002): in the case of a boycott, an opposition party may hinder the elections from gaining legitimacy in the eyes of domestic voters and international election observers (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009), but must usually pay a very high prise in foregoing the material benefits of the "loyal opposition" with legislative representation (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 411). In the case of a mass protest, the challengers may in turn stand to gain liberalising concessions from the regime (Schedler 2009b, 186), but cannot exclude the possibility of an authoritarian crackdown upon the protesters (Magaloni 2010).

Under these circumstances, the expected gain of participation may well outweigh that of non-participation. As especially the dependency upon the regime for resources is prone to split the opposition ranks by creating incentives to free-riding, the dominant strategy indeed often becomes acquiescence, as some adopt a coalitional strategy and

align with the regime at the risk of losing their political credibility among the voters, whereas more ideologically bent opponents form small niche parties (Schedler 2008). In the end, the old tactic of divide et impera hence carries the day with the dictator being able to contain institutionalised electoral uncertainty and freeze the level of competitiveness to his advantage (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 411–412; Levitsky and Way 2010a, 29–32; Posusney 2002, 48–49; Roessler and Howard 2008, 15–16; Schedler 2009b, 189–192).

2.3.2. The disequilibrium of competitive authoritarianism

Seeing that the opposition is so severely disadvantaged by the autocrat's "hyper-incumbency advantages" (Greene 2007, 2) that the very notion of resistance seems to turn futile, one cannot reasonably expect the degree of competitiveness to fluctuate much unless the equilibrium of hegemony is broken and the opposition can use the elections as a focal point for coalescence against the dictator. Because equilibria are by definition conjunctures of a game "that once entered into will not be departed from unless some exogenous conditions change" (Przeworski 1992, 106), scholars have ascribed a paramount role to external factors in explaining how the electoral playing field comes to be levelled after the foundation upon which the low level of competitiveness rests begins to erode, causing the polity ultimately to evolve into a competitive authoritarian regime.

An impetus for change is often provided by the economy. Just as economic growth translates into support and resources for the regime, the dictator is rendered vulnerable in times of slow growth rates and economic downturn – as the economy deteriorates so, too, does his level of support amongst the voters (Bunce and Wolchik 2009, 255–256, 2010, 49; Roessler and Howard 2008, 18–19), although hegemonic regimes must on average be considered rather robust to economic crises (Smith 2005). Nevertheless, in particular the elites seem to identify in economic crises a propitious moment for defection as the promise of spoils and promotions fades away, at the same time as the weak economy provides challengers with an issue to mobilise voters around. A well-known example of this is the decision taken by the Corriente Democrático faction under the lead of Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas to split from the ruling PRI party in the midst of the 1988 IMF crisis in Mexico and join an oppositional coalition shortly before the presidential elections (Reuter and Gandhi 2011, 85). Alternatively, the resource monopoly of the

regime may collapse as distributing patronage on a national scale turns too expensive in the long run, with the system beginning to malfunction as the fiscal health of the regime deteriorates (Roessler and Howard 2008, 13), or hegemonic rule is given the deathblow in the shape of extensive privatisation which, as Greene (2010) notes, gnaws away the public sector and enables the opposition to build up financial sources of its own.

As the efficacy of co-optation begins to crumble, autocrats seek to cushion the effects by taking increasingly to repression and manipulation (Schedler 2009b, 183). However, this substitution has in the post-Cold War era often only served to highlight the Janus-faced nature of electoral competition under autocracy. In an international political climate where liberal democracy has become the standard, manipulation and coercion easily spill over to outcry and condemnation beyond the immediate boarders of the country, which might play into the hands of the opposition at the game-level of elections. The clearest instances of this are autocracies with a heavy dependency upon international aid, such as is the case in much of sub-Saharan Africa. As aid is generally conditional upon making progress in liberalisation and democratisation, authoritarian rulers across the region are placed between a rock and a hard place in having to either risk losing these funds if they are caught rigging the ballot, or risk losing office if they refrain from fiddling with electoral integrity (Cox 2009, 4; Lust-Okar 2009b, 28–32; Roessler and Howard 2008, 13). This strategic dilemma turns all the more acute by today's almost omnipresent international election observers, who indeed seem to deserve some credit in ridding elections of the most blatant forms of fraud (Hyde 2007).

Apart from utilising their diplomatic leverage directly, international actors may exert influence over the electoral game indirectly through linkage, that is, through a country's economic, social and communicational ties to democratically ruled polities that can be used to alter the cost-benefit calculations of domestic actors. Internationally networked elites and voters can hereby gain incentives and resources to demand more liberalisation and fairer elections, but it can also benefit the opposition in the form of international legitimacy, assets, as well as important know-how from civil society and opposition groups abroad (Gleditsch and Ward 2006; Levitsky and Way 2005, 2010a, 339).

Even in the absence of a strong international input, an increased reliance on coercion or forged ballots involves potentially high costs for weakened autocrats since the altered parameters of the game grant the opposition more room to manoeuvre and a chance to tip the electoral scales in its favour as voters and elites become more volatile. In this context, opposition protests in the hope of institutional reforms can gain new saliency

(Schedler 2010b). Bunce and Wolchik (2009, 258–260) remark that increasing the level of repression at a time of crisis may smack of desperation and kindle resistance by signalising a possibility for political change. Fraud seems to have similar effects, for the suspect of "stolen elections" heightens the likelihood of remonstration even in the absence of international observers (compare Beaulieu and Hyde 2009; Bunce and Wolchik 2009, 264). Under these circumstances, opposition boycotts and mass protests can help to convert the voters, elites and – crucially – the armed forces to the belief of a turnover in power being possible, thus contributing to a kind of "self-fulfilling expectation" (Lindberg 2009a, 335–336) that is likely to translate into a greater vote-share for the opposition in the electoral arena (Gandhi and Przeworski 2009, 31–33).

Also the game-level strategies of the oppositional forces can make a difference to the electoral outcome. Competitiveness is known to gain a boost if opposition parties are capable of overcoming their internal commitment and collective action problems (see Gandhi 2008b) by creating a bloc against the common enemy in his hour of weakness, with the chances of this happening increasing as the regime begins to look weak and the material gains of collaborating with it fade away. Coalescence then becomes key to mobilising the elites and especially the voters in support of the opposition, as a broad *opposition coalition* is perceived to have better chances of bringing down the dictator and of governing once he has been removed (Bunce and Wolchik 2009, 262–263, 2010, 51; Howard and Roessler 2006, 371; Lindberg 2009a, 363; van de Walle 2002). In sum, elections may deliver the opposition new opportunities of winning over divided elites and volatile voters, elevating it to a much improved position from which to launch an offence against the regime in the electoral arena once a first crack in the autocrat's edifice of electoral dominance has appeared.

2.4. The limits of existent explanations – the contribution of this thesis

The aim of the account above was to present in summarised form the impressive progress that scholars have done in identifying the strategies employed by the electoral contenders when trying to woo the voters, as well as in explaining how these tactics engender dynamics in the political market that eventually transform a hegemonic system into a competitive one (or vice versa, should the reader be more inclined to the teachings of Machiavelli).

Where does all this leave us with regard to explaining divergence in the degree of competitiveness in structurally competitive authoritarian elections, then? Despite students of electoral authoritarianism having reached a consensus on many points, it nevertheless seems that the literature in its current state still has some way to go as far as the task of producing a more comprehensive understanding of electoral competitiveness in autocracies is concerned. Although scholars now agree on co-optation, coercion, and manipulation, on the one hand, and opposition boycotts, protests and coalitions on the other, alongside a set of exogenous factors to make up the building-blocks of competitiveness, even state-of-the-art contributions give us little in the way of a blueprint on how to forge these components into a coherent theoretical argument of the determinants of competitiveness under non-democratic rule.

While immediately disregarding the naïve idea of some grand theory aspiring for universal explanatory power and acknowledging that there is a considerable need for further theoretical as well as methodological advances in the nascent field, the crux of the matter is that, as the literature continues to grow, the important insights produced hitherto increasingly lack coordination, with scholars taking little interest in seeking to unite at least some of the already identified mechanisms in a more systematic manner. Indeed, most contributions persist in utilising the fairly limited theoretical and empirical scope of the pioneering generation of studies, with the investigators contenting themselves with exploring the workings of one single mechanism while ignoring other factors, this being endemic in much of Schedler's work (e.g. 2008; 2009b); delimiting the argument to only encompass one specific regime-subtype or time period as Greene (2010) and Roessler and Howard (2008) do; or, even when operating with a plurality of mechanisms, treating these as rivalling explanations to be successively eliminated in the course of the analysis, such as is the method of Bunce and Wolchik (2010).

Though such research designs are not without their merits, this practice is – when taken together with the variation originating from scholars' methodological choices – in the long run paramount to rendering our view of the phenomenon piecemeal and blurring the empirical picture. Should we for instance follow Schedler (2009b), who claims the level of competitiveness to be primarily dependent upon the government's control over the media, on the one hand, and opposition boycotts and protests, on the other? Or Greene (2010), who finds a big public sector to be the overriding explanatory variable? Or are these domestic factors in fact of only secondary importance when compared to regime-external causes as Levitsky and Way (2010a) would have us believe?

Echoing Munck (2001, 131) who with regard to the state of theory building in the field of democracy studies remarks how "[its] various insights do not quite add up to a clear statement of a general theory. Instead, they are only bits of theory that are unclearly related to one another", whereas its empirical testing is lacking insofar as this has been carried out "on only a small set of cases or on only a small set of explanatory variables raising doubts about the generalizability and/or the validity of causal claims" (ibid., 122), the literature on electoral authoritarianism still amounts to but a shadow of a thick and general theory. Yet, while the challenge of theoretical parochialism – whose existence is generally acknowledged in the field (see Miller 2009, 5–6) – continues to be an impediment to our efforts of piecing together the jigsaw-puzzle that is competitiveness, I suspect that this endeavour may be undermined by an additional problem that has received much less attention in the field so far. The question is in fact whether we are in possession of all the pieces necessary for assembling this puzzle in the first place.

Indeed, there is some concern that the literature on electoral authoritarianism has up till now largely overlooked two interlinked and potentially important factors in the study of competitiveness. The first of these pertains to the old "agency-structure problem" (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 4) and centres on the lack of attention paid to the broader societal structures in which the electoral game is embedded. This apprehension stems from an observation originally made by Dahl, who in his highly influential book "Polyarchy" (1971) noted how the path to polyarchy had traditionally run through competitive oligarchies, which had little by little turned increasingly inclusive. Paralleling one of the most important democratisation theories, modernisation theory (see Boix and Stokes 2003; Deutsch 1961; Lipset 1983; Przeworski et al. 2000), Dahl went on to consider demographic plurality together with the level of socioeconomic development to be among the driving forces behind this transformation process, with rising levels of development increasing the demand for competitive politics.

Even though the path itself, as Dahl acknowledged, had ceased to be of importance by the time of the third wave of democratisation since the overwhelming majority of non-democratic regimes had already turned broadly inclusive, this pattern hints at the possibility that societal structures may well affect electoral competitiveness under authoritarian rule. As Miller points out (2009, 6), structures as – to use the apt phrase of Merkel (2010a, 88–89) – a "corridor of action" that constrains the key actors and limits their room for manoeuvre are, however, seldom taken into account with regard to margins of victory. While structures are sometimes employed in a modernisation theoretical

sense as an alternative explanation to democratisation in studies probing the relationship between the degree of competitiveness and regime stability (see Brownlee 2009b; Bunce and Wolchik 2010), inquiries into the relationship between structures and competitiveness remain scarce and procure us with a mixed picture. While Greene (2010) discovers development when measured as GDP per capita to have the expected effect on the electoral balance between the incumbent and the opposition, the study of Roessler and Howard (2008) finds no trace of such a relationship, although the methodological soundness of the latter study is somewhat doubtful (see chapter 4.1.1).

Structures are also closely related to the second and far more imperative concern, which pertains to the nearby complete exclusion of another very likely source of variation that appears all the more bizarre when one considers the nature of the topic under investigation. The fact of the matter is that although competitiveness is conceived as the aggregate outcome of how the voters choose to cast their ballots, the electorate as a political actor is – as a perceptive reader no doubt has already noticed – more often than not conspicuous by its absence in the literature on electoral authoritarianism.

How can this staggering paradox be accounted for? Perusing the literature, it would seem that even if the choices of the electorate are recognised to have a major impact on the cost-benefit calculus of the two principal actors and thereby on the outcome of the electoral game (e.g. Lindberg 2009a, 326), many a scholar finds the task of identifying the preferences that guide the behaviour of the voters in non-democratic regimes to be herculean for dictators, opposition candidates and political scientists alike on account of the distorting effect exerted by the levels of manipulation and repression these systems entail (e.g. Schedler 2009b, 188). Most theories on competitiveness hence refrain from modelling voter behaviour altogether and instead simply take the relationship between the autocrat and the opposition to be of a zero-sum nature, with the electorate's favour being transferred automatically from the one to the other as the parameters of the game change (Bunce and Wolchik 2010, 62).

But to discard the masses merely on the grounds that it is challenging to incorporate them into the argument is not only simplistic; it leads the scholar to assume that the electorate is a monolith, whose actions are in essence nothing more than reactions. And there are good reasons to believe that this assumption is unwarranted in both its subcomponents. Regarding the latter part, just consider the simple examples of co-optation, which is generally believed successful as long as the incumbent has unrestrained access to resources, and economic downturns, which are thought to provoke dissatisfied voters

to defect en masse to the opposition. Yet as the phenomenon of oppositional niche parties testifies to, not all voters give into co-optation even when the dictator has a fat piggy-bank to draw on (Greene 2007, 2); an economic recession not always marks the end of the dictator's electoral support (Magaloni 2008, 263); and once voters do defect for whatever reason, this does not necessarily happen to the benefit of the opposition (Bunce and Wolchik 2010, 61–62).

All this suggests that the voters indeed have a will – or, better still, *wills* of their own, as also the assumption of the electorate constituting a monolithic actor seems unjustifiable if viewed in the light of a handful of newish case studies, in which Magaloni (2008), Blaydes (2006b), Lust-Okar (2006, 2009a, 2009b) and others have taken important first steps in mapping the terra incognita of voter behaviour in competitive authoritarian elections.[22] Although the insights of these studies are drawn from a small pool of countries (viz. Mexico, Egypt and Jordan) and caution is thus called for when making generalisations, the picture to emerge out of these endeavours is surprisingly coherent, and indicates that although the behaviour of the voting public in electoral autocracies often differs starkly from that in democratic polities due to the idiosyncratic institutional constraints put in place by this form of non-democratic rule, it follows a strikingly similar logic. Ecological factors (e.g. Aistrup 2004; Dawson and Robinson 1963; Koetzle 1998) and social cleavages (e.g. Lipset and Rokkan 1967) as traditional predictors of voter behaviour thus seem to retain their validity even in autocracies as the preferences that guide the citizens' actions appear to stem from their backgrounds and identities in terms of ethnicity, wealth and occupation. If one in keeping with the basic tenet of rational choice theory takes the voters to be rational, utility-maximising actors in pursuit of their interests, the observed patterns of how, for example, poor and rural voters tend to be regime-loyal, whereas their richer and urban compatriots tend to favour democracy suggest that voter behaviour in electoral autocracies varies systematically with the demographic and socio-economic composition of the electorate.

This train of thought logically leads to two interesting propositions. First, by enabling and constraining the choices of the government and opposition elites, the voters

[22] There is some older literature on voting behaviour in countries which the criteria used in this thesis would identify as electoral autocracies, this being the case especially with Mexico (see e.g. Domínguez and McCann 1995). Yet, operating outside the framework of electoral authoritarianism, these studies take into account the non-democratic nature of the institutional structures in which the electoral game is embedded to a varying degree – if at all – and the applicability of these insights is thus somewhat limited.

are clearly among the forces that help to strike a balance of power between these two actors at the polls, thereby directly affecting the degree of competitiveness. Subsequently, the voters constitute an indispensible part of the political equation of electoral autocracy and deserve a far more prominent role in theories of competitiveness than existing approaches are willing to permit. Second, the voters' influence on the margins of victory is clearly more complex than the literature at large has acknowledged. As the preferences guiding the voters' choices in this process reflect their various identities, which in turn mirror the socio-demographic underpinnings of society, the "voter effect" ought to be understood in terms of the consequences that different forms of *voter heterogeneity*, i.e. the particular composition of the electorate, have on voting behaviour and competitiveness. Because this necessitates "bringing the structures back in", a focus on the voters also serves to bridge the current gap between agency and structure.

In this light, the hypothesised relationship between the degree of competitiveness and the electorate emerges as simply too important and intriguing a topic to be ignored any further. Confident that opening up this black box will contribute to the literature on electoral authoritarianism by exploring a potentially important source of variation, the research question to which this thesis seeks an answer can be stated as follows:

> *What is the effect of voter heterogeneity on the degree of competitiveness in structurally competitive authoritarian elections?*

In addition to this, a secondary goal can be set. Seeing how earlier contributions have tended to operate within a framework that is plainly constrained in theoretical, geographical and temporal terms, the study at hand also aims at testing the robustness and generalisability of their findings in a broader empirical context. The subsequent analysis will thus not only encompass all theoretically relevant elections during the third wave of democratisation, but will also take into account alternative explanations as discussed earlier so as to evaluate their explanatory worth relative to one another and the voters.

Before either goal can be tackled, though, we need to develop an understanding of how different types of voters cast their ballots. The electorate must also be juxtaposed with the other actors in the larger analytical framework so as to derive testable hypotheses pertaining to the main point of interest. Consequently, the next chapter is devoted to the one contribution that enables me to do precisely this, namely Beatriz Magaloni's (2008) theory that seeks to explain the stability of electoral authoritarian rule through the lens of electoral competition and the voting behaviour of a heterogeneous electorate.

3. A theory of electoral competitiveness and voter heterogeneity

This chapter lays the theoretical foundation that will undergird the consequent empirical analysis probing the impact of a socio-demographically heterogeneous electorate on the margin of victory in electoral autocracies. With this goal in mind, the following sections survey the theory of Beatriz Magaloni (2008) as presented in her widely acclaimed book "Voting for autocracy. Hegemonic party survival and its demise in Mexico". Magaloni's contribution to the literature on electoral authoritarianism aims in all brevity at elucidating the mechanisms through which a hegemonic-party regime, on the one hand, retains its permanence and, on the other, loses its electoral dominance and democratises. Both of these processes are modelled as a decision-theoretic game involving four actors – the autocrat, the elites, the opposition and the voters – with my being primarily interested in the electorate.

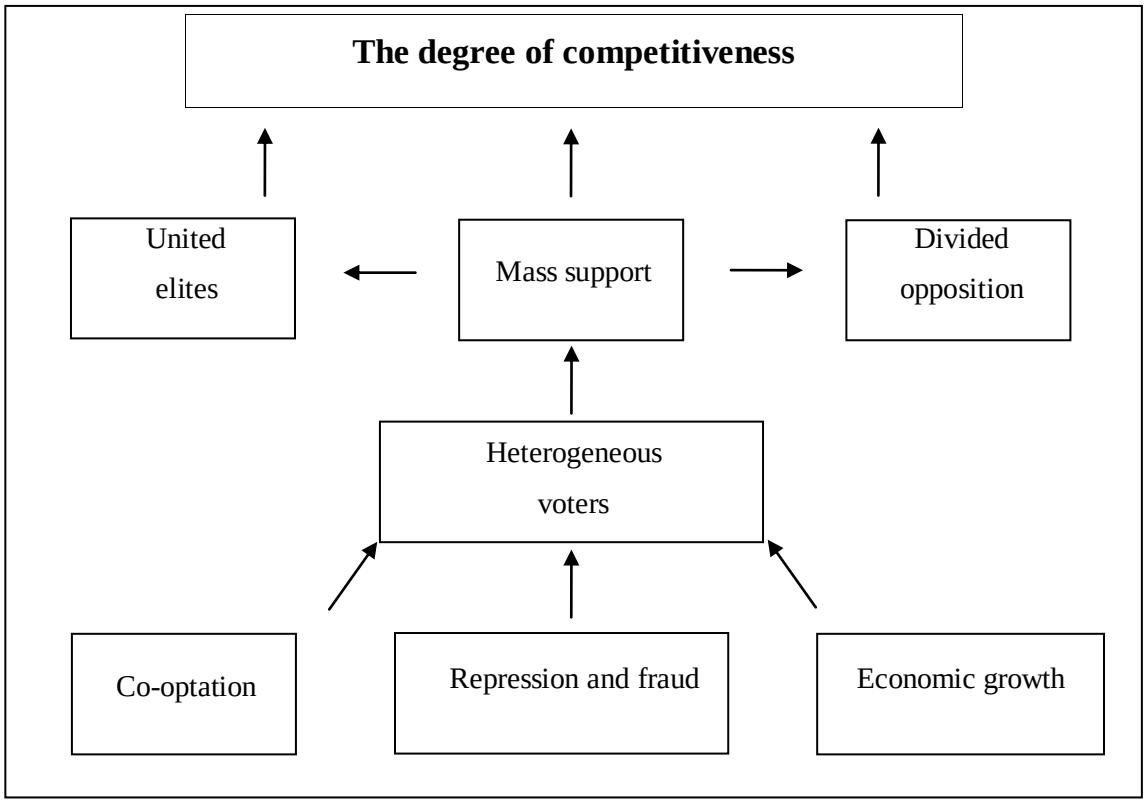
As will become clear presently, the theory provides a particularly well-suited framework for the inquiry at hand because it focuses explicitly on the voters, but in doing so also takes into account the strategies of the other actors, which enables me to address the previously discussed issue of "theoretical parochialism". Another reason for choosing this theory is that, although the argument is largely based on the case of Mexico, it is designed to be "broadly comparative" (ibid., 30), and should on Magaloni's own admission also be applicable to cases that are more commonly classified as competitive authoritarian regimes (ibid., 37). Nevertheless, the theory has to the best of my knowledge not been empirically applied to other cases so far, which means that my study with its global scope offers a prime opportunity for putting the generalisability of Magaloni's thesis to the test. While the bulk of the chapter hence focuses on reproducing Magaloni's argument and deriving hypotheses from it, the section ends on a more critical note with a discussion of the potential pitfalls that may arise when using what is essentially a middle-range theory in a global, cross-national analysis.

3.1. Introduction – the autocrat and the structure of the electoral game

In seeking to explain the "mechanics of the survival and demise" (Magaloni 2008, 4) of hegemonic rule, Magaloni's theory of authoritarian electoral politics, whose most important insights are illustrated in Figure 3.1, takes as its point of departure the by now familiar argument of elections being instituted for the purpose of resolving the two fundamental dilemmas common to all non-democratic rulers, i.e. how to ensure the compli-

ance and the cooperation of their peers and subjects. In the case of competitive elections, this requires the autocrat to win at the polls, which is achieved by luring the elites and the masses to support the regime, and by forcing the opposition to invest in the existent institutions in lieu of endeavouring to overthrow them (Magaloni 2008, 7–10).

Figure 3.1. *Determinants of electoral competitiveness*



Based on Magaloni (2008).

A self-sustaining equilibrium of low competitiveness depends in electoral autocracies upon three factors: *united elites*, a *divided opposition*, and *mass support*. In Magaloni's view, the two first pillars are subordinate to the last, since electoral support, apart from its intrinsic value, also possesses instrumental worth by helping the autocrat to deter defections from the ranks of the elites and to discourage the opposition from coordinating. On the one hand, supermajorities create *an image of the autocrat being invincible* and of resistance being futile, while they, on the other hand, enable the autocrat to *manipulate the institutional landscape* to his advantage seeing as altering the electoral rules and instigating political budget cycles mostly requires a legislative majority. This means that institutional engineering is in fact an endogenous feature of electoral autocracies as long as the autocrat sustains his electoral dominance of which it is a direct result (ibid., 15–19).

The lowest row in Figure 3.1 exhibits the arsenal of weapons at the dictator disposal when he seeks to shape the electoral game in such a way as to trap the other actors in a series of strategic dilemmas that will lead to the desired behaviour. The most functional mechanism is *co-optation*, which aims at forging an oversized coalition through the distribution of government spoils and pork, while generating vested interests in the survival of the regime that enable the dictator to reap the benefits of supermajorities. Patronage networks work to this end by putting in place a "punishment regime" which renders access to spoils conditional upon supporting the incumbent autocrat and sees defectors being punished by foregoing patronage, thus keeping the ruling coalition united while excluding the opposition and its supporters from the material gains of government. Besides patronage, the threat of *repression* is employed as a deterrent. The dictator does not make use of force systematically or on a grand scale, however, unless his hold on power is truly threatened. As long as the autocrat enjoys the electorate's support, also *electoral fraud* is superfluous, but can be used to contribute to the regime's image of invincibility by pushing the margin of victory upwards, even though the cost of this practise is a legitimacy deficit that may, for instance, rob the dictator of foreign aid (see also Simpser 2004). The autocrat furthermore employs *institutional manipulation* and exploits his *control over the media* to boost his vote share. Lastly, though it does not really qualify as a "strategy" in itself, *economic growth* is nevertheless conducive to low levels of competitiveness inasmuch as it generates the resources necessary for maintaining patronage networks and the army, while endowing the regime with performance legitimacy (Magaloni 2008, 15–24).

The viability of this hegemonic equilibrium based on mass support and co-optation is conditional upon two factors. Firstly, it requires funds, and slacking economic growth is consequently detrimental to the dictator's electoral support as it not only breeds discontent, but also forces the regime to opportunistic economic cycles, which in the long term undermine the sustainability of the "punishment regime". Secondly, the dictator's capacity to maintain the support of the masses varies according to the heterogeneity of the electorate because the behaviour of the voters is determined by their preferences, and certain changes in the composition of the electorate may hence render the voters less prone to accept continued non-democratic rule as the price of patronage (ibid.).

Should the degree of competitiveness rise and the dictator's electoral support begin to wither in a more systematic fashion due to mismanagement of the national economy, a shrinking public sector or a proliferation of discontented voters, the incumbent auto-

crat is expected to take to committing massive fraud enforced with violence in order to keep the elites and the opposition from capitalising on the increasing volatility of the voters. These strategies are likely to fail in the long run, however, for even if the incumbent is in possession of sufficient funds to impose the status quo on his challengers in a at least semi-systematic manner, he cannot "control too many people simply by threatening to use force" (Magaloni 2008, 19), he loses his discretionary power over the process of institutional change and budget-making, while supermajorities based on fraud are incapable of dissuading elites from splitting as they reveal the existence of latent voter dissatisfaction. If the opposition under these circumstances succeeds in co-ordinating with the electorate, the regime – by now a competitive autocracy – may experience a transition to democracy (ibid., 15–24).

In Magaloni's formulation, the outcome of the electoral game is in other words in a high degree a function of the autocrat's ability to mobilise mass support, which is vital for thwarting challenges from the elites and the opposition (ibid., 79). But before exploring how different types of voters either comply with or defy this imperative and what the consequences of this heterogeneity are for competitiveness at the aggregate level, let us take a look at the strategic dilemmas faced by the two remaining players of the electoral game – the elites and the opposition – and how these actors react to the choice of the electorate to either support or oppose the dictator.

3.2. The elites and the dilemma of splitting

To understand the behaviour of the elites within the parameters of the electoral game as specified above, Magaloni draws on an ambition-theoretic framework that sees an instrumentally rational and utility-seeking politician facing the strategic dilemma of whether to stay loyal to the regime or to try her fortune by defecting to the opposition. The politician's utility function when sticking to the ruling coalition is defined as follows (Magaloni 2008, 45):

$$E(U_i) = P_I N_I(\alpha S_I + \delta I_I) - C_I \tag{3.1}$$

Here, P_I is the likelihood of winning under the label of the incumbent party; N_I stands for the probability of obtaining its nomination; the parenthesis refers to the utility derived from holding office, consisting of access to government spoils, S_I, and the opportunity to advance some ideological goal, I_I, with α and δ representing the weight the politician attaches to these two factors respectively. Lastly, C_I is the cost of campaign-

ing under the label of the incumbent. The corresponding utility the politician can expect to derive from running as an opposition candidate is in turn defined as (ibid.):

$$E(U_O) = P_O N_O(\alpha S_O + \delta I_O) - C_O - E(F) \quad (3.2)$$

and is identical to equation (3.1), with the addition of expected electoral fraud, E(F).

These equations allow one to deduce when splits become likely and what sorts of politicians are more susceptible to defections. Firstly, splits are less likely when the probability of gaining office is greater under the label of the incumbent than under the banner of the opposition ($P_I > P_O$). This is highly important as it signifies that the dominant strategy of any ambitious politician is to remain loyal to the incumbent even in spite of meagre spoils, a hierarchical nomination process and ideological divisions as long as there is no real possibility of gaining electoral support in the ranks of another party. Secondly, defections are unlikely when the chances of gaining the nomination of the party, N_I, increase, for example, as a consequence of term-limits. A politician – if not elected this time around – will thus remain loyal if he has some probability of being elected in the future and the "continuation value", i.e. the expected benefit from the next period onward, exceeds that of splitting. The continuation value also rises when the chances of defectors gaining the nomination of an opposition party (N_O) are slim, as is the case when institutional manipulation raises the entry costs into the electoral game (Magaloni 2008, 46–55).

Thirdly, the risk of splits decreases when access to ample government spoils is made dependent upon an affiliation with the ruling coalition ($S_I > S_O$). Fourthly, if our hypothetical politician is ideologically motivated and wants to pursue some policy goal or democracy, he is more likely to opt for the opposition or a satellite party, whereas more pragmatic politicians, who are supposed to make up the majority, defect only when the incumbent's electoral support begins to waver. Fifthly and finally, splits are not expected to occur when it is more costly to run as an opposition candidate than as a member of the ruling coalition ($C_O > C_I$). This can be achieved by means of repression, electoral fraud, but also by resorting to media manipulation and by allowing politicised public resources to be used as campaign funds (ibid.).

In a summarised form, the elites are – bar a few strongly ideological politicians – likely to remain united when they receive an abundance of spoils, and when one-sided media coverage, prejudiced institutions, electoral fraud and the threat of repression serve as deterrents. Yet, the crucial factor determining the unity of the elites is the dicta-

tor's electoral support. If the image of the invincible incumbent fades away, a prospect of gaining office outside of the ruling coalition emerges, and the incentives to split begin to stack up, inducing in consequence the degree of competitiveness to rise.

3.3. The opposition and the dilemma of co-ordination

If a politician decides to seek office as the candidate of an opposition party, the question on his part becomes how to work together with the voters to dislodge the incumbent autocrat. In the electoral game as orchestrated by the dictator, the opposition's electoral success thus hinges on it overcoming three mass co-ordination dilemmas, the first of which consists of *persuading the voters to shift their support from the incumbent to his challengers* if the latter are to extricate the former. This dilemma stems from the fact that, while the voters' decision about whether to cast their ballots in favour of the incumbent or the opposition determines who controls the national office, there is no guarantee that the electorate will co-ordinate on this point. Consequently, the incumbent wins if the number of voters who cast a ballot for him exceeds a certain threshold d ($V_I > d$), while the opposition is crowned the victor if its vote share surpasses the said threshold ($V_O > d$) (Magaloni 2008, 73–76).

Second, once the voters are ready to defect, they must be induced to *back up the strongest opposition party with the best prospects of defeating the autocrat*. This dilemma derives from the fact that there are at least two opposition parties (O_1, O_2, O_3,… O_n) and the policy space is multidimensional. For the sake of simplicity, the opposition parties are supposed to share a common standpoint on a *regime/anti-regime dimension* with all seeking to oust the dictator and establish a democratic regime, but their views differ on a *socio-economic dimension* with the parties thus landing either to the right or to the left of the incumbent with regard to their economic policies. The parties may alternatively be divided along ethnic lines, in which case ethnicity is considered to reflect differences in the parties' economic policy stances on the grounds that ethnic groups tend to be geographically concentrated and their preferences are largely shaped by what they produce (see Bates 1989). If the voters fail to co-ordinate, the divisiveness of the opposition plays directly into the hands of the incumbent, for the more fractionalised the opposition vote (V_O) is, the lower the threshold d required for securing office drops (ibid.).

Both of these dilemmas are largely mitigated if the opposition forms a unified electoral front behind which the voters can rally. Yet, forming such an alliance is everything but unchallenging. On the one hand, the oppositional camp is often divided due to internal disputes originating from ethnic cleavages, policy strives or personal rivalries. On the other, the lack of cohesion is a direct result of the incumbent's institutional manipulation as the electoral rules are crafted with the outright purpose of dividing the opposition by creating pay-offs that are non-conducive to coalescence (Magaloni 2008, 25–26).

In the case of a divided opposition, the task of pushing up the degree of competitiveness turns more demanding. Yet, the opposition can overcome these dilemmas when the following conditions hold. Firstly, co-ordination is more probable if one of the parties develops into a strong fore-runner around which the voters can coalescence, and for which they are prepared to bridge their ideological or ethnical divisions. *Strategic voting* means that even if the opposition parties lie on opposite sides of the incumbent party on the socio-economic dimension, coalescence is – contrary to Riker's thesis (1976) of how policy divergences on the left-right dimension impede voter co-ordination – still possible provided that the regime dimension becomes the predominant point of reference for the electorate. This requires, however, that the opposition voters behave tactically, that is to say, they are prepared to set their ideological differences aside for the benefit of toppling the incumbent. If a voter in other words prefers, say, a left-wing (O_L) to a right-wing (O_R) opposition party, while both of these are preferable to the incumbent (I) in the centre, he is prepared to sacrifice his first-choice in order to cast his ballot for the right-wing opposition party if it is the strongest contender to the incumbent (Magaloni 2008, 73–76).

Secondly, for tactical voting to turn into *strategic defection* that sees the electorate desert the dictator en masse, the voters must perceive that a sufficient number of other voters are going to defect. The impression of the dictator's invincibility must in other words be broken, for as long as the autocrat remains unassailable behind robust margins of victory, voters will not waste their ballot on the strongest opposition party – it being a challenger without any real prospects of winning – and possibly risk punishment (ibid.).

Seeing how co-ordination is thus a tipping-game (compare van de Walle 2002), where the behaviour of a comparatively small subset of voters can trigger a massive chain reaction, the dissemination of information about the preferences of the other actors and how the different parties actually fare at the polls plays a central role in

unleashing both strategic defections from the ruling party and strategic voting for the strongest opposition party (ibid.).

Information, moreover, plays a part in the third mass co-ordination dilemma which pertains to *the incumbent's use of electoral fraud enforced by threats of violence*. When the dictator chooses to commit fraud, he traps his challengers in a classical prisoner's dilemma, for if one of the opposition parties disputes the election outcome and takes to the streets, the other party may stand more to gain from accepting the results than from joining the protest. The fact is that playing the "loyal opposition" not only grants the party legislative representation and policy-making power, but may also endow it with a pay-off in the next election, because as long as the extent of electoral malpractices is *not* common knowledge, opposition voters will react to allegations of fraud on the basis of their preconceived ideas about the current regime and their readiness to tolerate violence. So-called moderate voters do not perceive the regime as very autocratic, which leads them to disbelieve allegations of fraud as these could lead the incumbent to retort with repression, whereas radical voters with a clear conception of the regime's autocratic undertone are inclined to believe the cries of fraud and are willing to risk violence in making their votes count. As the former will believe the elections to be clean and abandon the rebelling party in favour of the acquiescing one or the incumbent, while the latter deem the elections to be fraudulent and abandon the acquiescing party for the rebelling one or abstain from voting altogether, a co-ordinated rebellion is difficult to achieve and the dictator gets away with fraud scot-free (Magaloni 2008, 228–237).

Because the risk of a violent post-electoral conflict rises as the opposition strengthens and the dictator becomes more dependent upon fraud, this dilemma gains saliency only when the degree of competitiveness is already fairly high, and especially when fraud is needed for the dictator to win. This explains why Magaloni chooses to model the "strategic game of fraud" as a transition game. If this game is to end in an alternation of power, the opposition must be able to deter the dictator from stealing the elections by mobilising enough voters to protest against his transgressions either ex-ante or ex-post. This in turn requires that its voters are mostly radical or that electoral fraud is made common knowledge, in which case both radical and moderate voters can be mobilised. As long as the dictator has an iron grip of the media, however, the lack of information will effectively hamper mass co-ordination from occurring as voters will not be able to judge the quality of the elections (ibid., 76, 266–267).

To recapitulate, the electoral success of the opposition is tied to its coalescence with the electorate. While the dictator is adroit in dividing his challengers with the help of institutional manipulation and electoral fraud, the ensuing co-ordination dilemmas can nonetheless be mitigated and the margins of victory levelled when the actors gain more information about each other's preferences, which motivates the voters to rally behind the strongest opposition contender. But for information to play a role, the voters must be willing to defect in the first place. If the electorate is firmly behind the incumbent, the opposition has precious little leeway – regardless of whether it stands united or divided.

3.4. The electorate and the dilemma of voting

Based on the argument so far, it is clear that the electorate actively contributes to upholding a low level of competitiveness – as Magaloni notes, often in spite of slacking economic growth, electoral corruption and fruitless policies – this being the "tragic brilliance" (Magaloni 2008, 19) of hegemonic rule: although the voters are free to choose, their choices are restrained by a sequence of strategic dilemmas that force them, however reluctantly, to support the incumbent autocrat. Yet, once the electorate does decide to "throw the rascals out", it also plays a crucial role in dislodging the autocrat and inaugurating democracy.

In modelling the all-important dilemma of whether to cast a ballot for the incumbent or one of the opposition parties, Magaloni departs from the assumption that the voters are concerned with finding a political party that can maximise their utility. The voters' consequent voting decisions are based on their expectations about the state of the national economy as posited by economic voting theory (see Downs 1965; Fiorina 1981), but also on their expectations about their own economic situation and fear of post-electoral violence, as well as on their ideological views (Magaloni 2008, 19; see also Domínguez and McCann 1995).

Leaving the issue of violence aside for the time being, the voters are thought to form expectations about the future in the following ways. As regards *sociotropic evaluations* about how a party will handle inflation, growth, wages and other aspects of the national economy if elected, the voters are assumed to make their calculations using Bayesian logic. The voters in other words hold some prior knowledge about how the party can be expected to perform, which they then revise in the light of new information. The expected economic performance of the incumbent ($\overline{P_t^I}$) is thus the weighted average of the

mean economic performance observed by the voters during their lifetime ($\overline{P_{iO}^{I}}$), updated with information about the current state of the economy (P_t) and the incumbent's campaign promises (P_{pt+1}^{I}) to which the voters may attach diverging weights (w_0, w_1, w_2) (Magaloni 2008, 57), and yields the following calculus:

$$\overline{P_i^I} = \frac{1}{w_0+w_1+w_2}\left(w_0\overline{P_{iO}^I} + w_1P_t + w_2P_{pt+1}^I\right) \tag{3.4}$$

What equation (3.4) reveals is that while economic growth induces the voters to support the dictator, they do not necessarily turn against him in times of an economic recession, provided that the autocrat has delivered in the past and the opposition parties are an uncertain choice. This is the case when the latter have never governed, and their campaign promises therefore cannot be evaluated in the light of an earlier track-record.[23] Although the voters will hence stick to the known devil even when the economy takes a downturn, their patience is not infinite: if the economy deters in a more systematic fashion, the voters increasingly lose their belief in the incumbent's capacity to manage the economy and are more willing to take a risk by switching to the opposition (Magaloni 2008, 56–64).

The voters are also presumed to make *pocketbook evaluations* regarding the personal gain they can expect from the parties in the form of cash transfers, land and jobs. Because the incumbent has an interest in maintaining an oversized coalition and is unilaterally in control of government transfers and programmes, he engages in clientelism to reward loyal voters, while withdrawing funds from those who opt for the opposition. If this "punishment regime" is effective, the voters will infer that their defection will be punished, and the more dependent they are on these transfers, the greater the utility they draw from supporting the incumbent. Punishment requires, however, that the incumbent is capable both of screening between followers and adversaries, and of targeting side-payments only to those voters who actually do case their ballots for the incumbent after having received their payment. While the latter can be achieved by distributing only excludable material benefits instead of public goods, the former requires that the voters

[23] The expected economic performance of opposition party O ($\overline{P_i^O}$) thus constitutes an unsolvable equation:

$\overline{P_i^O} = \frac{1}{\sigma}P_{Pt+1}^O$

which combines the voters' diffuse primary knowledge ($\frac{1}{\sigma}$) with a normal distribution (P_{Pt+1}^O), where both μ and σ^2 are unknown. This uncertainty (σ) is not constant, however, and can vary, for example, with media coverage or with the propensity of a party to change its policy stances (Magaloni 2008, 58–59).

can be somehow effectively monitored. Clientelism subsequently promises to be successful in smaller rural communities, where it is easier for local party cadres to gather knowledge about the citizens and their voting behaviour (Magaloni 2008, 64–68).

The third factor to influence the voters' behaviour consists of their ideological standpoints relative to those of the alternative parties. Here, the policy space is again thought to be multidimensional with a socio-economic dimension reflecting the electorate's concerns about a number of economic policies, such as social policy and taxation, and a regime dimension that pertains to its views on political issues regarding democracy, electoral reform and the protection of human rights. These two dimensions vary independently of one another, with ethnicity once more mapping onto salient economic policy divisions (ibid., 69).

One can begin to appreciate the strategic dilemma the voter i faces if one examines his utility function, which reveals the relationship between ideological concerns and transfers to be a trade-off (ibid.):

$$\beta_i E[p_O - p_I] - \gamma_i(ID_{iO} - ID_{iI}) = \alpha_i T_{iI}^* \tag{3.5}$$

where the voter's utility of voting for the incumbent equals that of voting for the opposition party O as long as the utility difference between the incumbent autocrat and the opposition with regard to expected economic performance ($E[p_O - p_I]$) and ideology ($ID_{iO} - ID_{iI}$) is the equivalent of the minimum transfer needed to make the voter opt for the dictator (T_{iI}^*). The constants β, α, and γ once again refer to the weight the voter attaches to these considerations.

From this, two propositions about why voters decide to opt for the incumbent and continued authoritarian rule can be derived. Voters may, on the one hand, support the ruling government "sincerely" on the grounds that they are convinced of the incumbent's superior capacity to manage the economy, or due to ideological motives, although – as Magaloni points out – ideology seems to be of little importance in explaining why voters support dictators. On the other, voters may support the autocrat "strategically" for fear of financial punishment. Conversely, it can be conjectured that, in order for the voters to defect to the opposition and raise the level of competitiveness, the utility differential derived from economic performance and ideological propinquity must outweigh the financial punishment the voters incur by being deprived patronage (ibid., 69–72, 79–81).

It is one of the key insights of Magaloni's theory that while all voters face this dilemma, some are in a better position than others to solve it to the advantage of the opposition, and that the degree of electoral competitiveness – paralleling modernisation theory – accordingly mirrors a society's socio-demographic heterogeneity. With the help of equation (3.5) and the propositions about voter behaviour that Magaloni draws from it, this relationship can be explored empirically by working out six hypotheses.

Firstly, the price of buying votes (T_i^*) increases as the ideological difference between the incumbent party and the voters grows on either the socio-economic or the regime dimension. Co-optation consequently turns more expensive the more the voters either disagree with the economic policies of the incumbent, or commit themselves to democratisation (Magaloni 2008, 69–72). Remembering that ethnic affiliations are thought to reflect economic interests and that a plurality of ethnic groups thus translates into a plurality of potentially conflicting preferences, the following can be hypothesised as concerns ideological differences about economic policy:

H_{1a}: *The less the voters agree with the incumbent's economic policies, the higher the degree of competitiveness.*

H_{1b}: *The more ethnically heterogeneous a nation, the higher the degree of competitiveness.*

Secondly and pertaining to the regime dimension, the price of securing compliancy (T_i^*) increases the less the voters are concerned about financial punishment, viz. the smaller the weight α attached to it is. Because side-payments generate a higher "marginal utility" among poor voters than among middle-class voters and the rich, the latter are more capable of making "ideological investments" in democracy and are thus likely to vote for the opposition. The former's calculations tend in turn to prioritise transfers, rendering poor voters typically the most loyal supporters of the dictator (ibid., 69–72). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H_2: *The richer the median voter, the higher the degree of competitiveness*.

Thirdly and relating to the previous hypothesis, the price of votes (T_i^*) goes up when the economic situation deteriorates. As long as the economy grows, the voters have a reason to support the incumbent sincerely – this being true of the rich as well – and a healthy economy may thus be expected to cancel out the effects of socio-economic voter heterogeneity to some extent, even though this tactic may eventually turn counter-

productive as increasing wealth will over time translate into a higher median income (Magaloni 2008, 69–72). Also the short-term incentive of economic growth is evanescent in the face of economic recessions, however, which gives rise to the hypothesis:

H_3: *The less economic growth, the higher the degree of competitiveness.*

Fourthly, Magaloni proposes that the effectiveness of the "punishment regime" in deterring voter exit is conditional upon the incumbent government being able to screen between its friends and foes, and to target the former with spoils. This is a feasible assumption in small and homogeneous rural communities, where the incumbent can gather local knowledge about the electorate. In such an environment, the autocrat also finds it easier to get away with violating the secrecy of the ballot (ibid.). On the basis of this, it can be hypothesised that:

H_4: *The more urban the nation, the higher the degree of competitiveness.*

The last element can now be added to the picture, namely the voters' expectations about post-electoral violence, which influence their choice between the opposition and the incumbent in the following way (ibid., 78):

$$E_i[I] = pR \tag{3.6}$$
$$E_i[O] = (1-p)[(1-q)A - qV]$$

in which case p denotes the probability of the incumbent winning a majority, whereas R stands for the value of maintaining the existent political regime without a post-electoral conflict. The voter's utility of voting for the opposition is a lottery between the election ending in a peaceful alternation in power (A) and a post-electoral conflict (V), which ranges in severity from temporary political instability to outright civil war ($V \geq 0$) and where violence occurs with the probability q.

Here, the voter's utility of voting for the incumbent grows in tandem with the risk of post-electoral violence ($V > 0$), which logically follows from the voter knowing that, by supporting the opposition, he may prompt an authoritarian response, which might end in violence erupting.[24] The risk of this happening in turn increases as the opposition gains strength and the dictator becomes more willing to risk a violent conflict in order to remain in power, viz. when p decreases. As long as an opposition victory is a virtual im-

[24] The voter's complete utility function of supporting the incumbent thus reads (Magaloni 2008, 55):
$U_i = \beta_i E[p_I] + \alpha E[t_I] - \gamma_i ID_{iI}^k - \lambda_i E[v_I]$

possibility, the risks of violence are in other words expected to be insignificant, and this calculation can by means of analogy therefore be assumed to be more salient in competitive authoritarian regimes than in hegemonic ones (Magaloni 2008, 78).

As the section on the co-ordination dilemmas of the opposition already disclosed, the risk of violence is in Magaloni's theory linked to a transition game involving electoral fraud and opposition protests. Here, the effect that the voters' expectations of violence have on the degree of competitiveness in the elections following the protests was, under conditions of imperfect voter information, thought to be a function of their preconceptions about the nature of the regime and their tolerance of violence (ibid., chapter 8). Unfortunately, tying the impact of violence to this very specific context precludes the possibility of repression having an impact on voter behaviour and altering the consequences of voter heterogeneity on competitiveness irrespective of post-electoral opposition protests. In order not to ignore the broader implications of violence on the calculus of voting, I decide to interpret Magaloni's observation of the voters' dislike for violence in a more general sense, and the last hypothesis to be investigated thus reads:

H_5: *The more repressive the regime, the lower the degree of competitiveness.*

3.5. Discussion – is the Mexican case representative?

By means of a conclusion, Magaloni's (2008) argument thus amounts to a convincing "alternative" recipe for electoral competitiveness, whose empirical and theoretical value the author demonstrates throughout her book by assiduously testing its many implications using a broad array of sophisticated methods and versatile data. The result of this undertaking is one of the most meticulous and deep-going analyses to date of the mechanics that accounted for the exceptional durability of the PRI regime (1929–2000) and its eventual transition to democracy (Duquette 2007).

Notwithstanding the notable insights the theory has produced about the Mexican case, then, its heavy emphasis on this particular country also constitutes a potential source of concern with regard to its broader applicability. Certainly, Magaloni (2008, 32–37) takes care to emphasise that her argument is not the outcome of a case study *sensu stricto,* as it has been modelled on the larger group of hegemonic party regimes and competitive regimes displaying a tendency of developing into such systems. Like most other empirical theories in the field of comparative politics, Magaloni's argument may therefore be characterised as a middle-range theory, whose explanatory powers are

in fact, more or less, delimited to a particular context – in this instance to hegemonic authoritarian regimes. But as Lauth, Pickel, and Pickel (2009, 25–27) point out, although restricting the scope of the theory in this fashion is largely a precondition for its empirical testability, it does come at a cost, since it may compromise the generalisability of the argument. There is in other words reason to ponder how well Magaloni's theory can be expected to fare in explaining variation in the degree of competitiveness beyond realm of its original context?

On closer inspection, there is indeed some concern that the perforce delimited explanatory scope of Magaloni's argument may cause problems for the more global analysis carried out later in this thesis. It must, for instance, be recognised that focusing on the very particular regime type of hegemonic parties regimes causes the theory – for all its tribute to the art of manipulative "heresthetics" (Riker 1983) – to explore the workings of competitive authoritarian elections in a certain institutional context, namely that of a consolidated party system and, in particular, a strong ruling party with dense organisational structures. In this view, the incumbent party is in fact amongst the most instrumental factors in keeping the elites united and in maintaining a functioning "punishment regime" by establishing the necessary links to the electorate. Together with the opposition parties, it also serves to structure political competition by linking policy preferences to partisanship (see also Brownlee 2007).

In the absence of these conditions, however, it is not difficult to conceive that the functions of authoritarian elections may take on a form very different from that envisaged by Magaloni's theory. An illustrative example of this is provided by the idea of maintaining a "punishment regime" in autocratically ruled monarchies. This is a regime type that is typically characterised by weak parliaments with scant policy-making powers and, consequently, elections that are devoid of all political meaning. With elections thus degenerating into a mere game for patronage, electoral participation turns into an act of accepting and legitimating the fundamental nature of the regime – regardless of party label – while non-participation and abstention become the only true outlets for anti-system protest. Under these circumstances, a punishment regime as understood by Magaloni is clearly superfluous for creating "a market for political loyalty", as defec-

tions from one party to another do not reflect political dissidence, but rather mirror the ability of the candidates to deliver the goods (Blaydes 2006b; Lust-Okar 2009a).[25]

The above example enables a smooth transition to another implicit institutional precondition of the theory, namely the form of government. Although the evidence on this point must still be considered suggestive at best, it seems that there are systematic differences in how different types of incumbents view elections and electoral outcomes. Accordingly, since the legitimacy of monarchs does not hinge upon electoral support, they have been argued to take less of an interest in mobilising voters in support of the ruling party and in attaining supermajorities at the polls than presidents and premiers. In fact, by ruling over a fragmented parliament, crowned heads-of-state may legitimate their own position as arbiters between the dissonant parties (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 413). Contrary to Magaloni's theory, a high degree of competitiveness would in this instance actually benefit the ruling autocrat.

Also its understandably heavy focus on the political and social context of Mexico may have infused Magaloni's theory with more idiosyncratic influences that do not necessarily fit the experiences of other countries – a point lucidly demonstrated by the role allotted to the opposition parties. Indeed, because opposition boycotts appear not to have been a prevalent feature of Mexican elections during the PRI-regime, this tactic is wholly absent from the theory. Something similar is true of protests, as Magaloni delimits the stratagem to a very particular context by modelling it as a component of the transition game evolving around electoral fraud. While this may again do justice to the Mexican case, the theory is thereby rendered incapable of incorporating protests that take on a different form, pertain to some other aspect of the elections or are pre-electoral (see Schedler 2009b). In addition, the very fact that Magaloni in doing so bundles together such versatile phenomena as protests, violence, electoral fraud and regime transitions, makes it at times less than clear what the consequences of an opposition protest on its electoral fortunes are supposed to be. This is especially true of the outcome denoted as "violence" in the transition game. Here, the fraudulent nature of the elections is assumed to be common knowledge or its voters are predominantly radical, which enables the opposition parties to mount a united protest against the dictator, who may then take to an authoritarian crackdown in order to stay in power (Magaloni 2008, 230–231).

[25] This suggests that, contrary to what Brownlee (2007) claims, elections contribute to regime reproduction independently of the effect of political parties (see also Blaydes 2008; Reuter and Gandhi 2011).

To specify the consequences of this outcome further is, however, exceedingly challenging as they could range between anything from the vote share of the opposition rising if it gains concessions from the regime, to the opposition parties being severely weakened should the autocrat suppress the protests brutally.

What's more, the "Mexican bias" may be salient also as regards the issue that is central to this investigation, namely the question of how different types of voter heterogeneity spill over to different types of voter behaviour and affect thus the degree of competitiveness at the aggregate level. In Magaloni's theory, voter heterogeneity is modelled by enabling voters with dissimilar backgrounds to place diverging weights on the considerations in the voting calculus. Although this precludes the very real possibility of voter heterogeneity manifesting itself as different decision rules – i.e. that the voting calculus itself may diverge, for instance, on the basis of the voter's level of political awareness (see Bartle 2005; Roy 2009) – the approach is, following Rivers (1988, 737), justifiable as the goal of the theory is not so much to "characterize voter decision processes" as it is to account for the outcomes of elections by predicting vote choice with reference to socio-demographic factors.

The question of interest hence becomes whether the socio-demographic predictors that Magaloni has chosen to include in her model are representative of voters' identities beyond the Mexican context. This is moot dilemma, to say the least, as is well-known from the literature on social cleavages and party-systems. The fact of the matter is that a discrepancy is likely to exist in any given society between the number of latent and politicised identities, as not all societal cleavages gain saliency in the political sphere. The identities that are of importance to voting behaviour will thus invariably differ from country to country, but may also fluctuate over time within countries (Evans and Whitefield 2000; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Stoll 2008).

In view of this, even a superficial perusal of the broader literature dealing with socio-demographic diversity and politically salient identities is likely to expose Magaloni's selection as a rather limited one (e.g. Casstevens and Press 1963; Lijphart 1999; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Indeed, whilst income, place of residence and ethnicity are arguably among the most important identities to mediate the vote choice (e.g. Koetzle 1998; Lee 1971; Mozaffar and Scarritt 2005), it requires no great leap of the scholarly imagination to expand this list with such factors as education, gender or religion (e.g. Choi 2007; Eifert, Miguel, and Posner 2010), even though these were not shown to have an influence in the elections surveyed by Magaloni (2008, chapter 6).

Having said this, the limitations of Magaloni's theory may not be as severe as the account above might let one believe. For one, since the literature on electoral authoritarianism has so far not succeeded in identifying any systematic differences in the mechanisms that drive hegemonic and competitive authoritarian rule, the "institutional anomalies" discussed here are in fact concentrated to a fairly small group of regimes, which makes them easily containable in the subsequent analysis.[26] Besides, while the theory in its current form may indeed leave room for further refinement, the short-term effects of opposition boycotts can for the purpose of this thesis be included without much loss to the integrity of the original argument.

Finally with regard to the voting calculus, then, the parsimony of Magaloni's theory may in fact turn out to be more of a strength than a weakness when expanding the scope of the argument. Indeed, economic issues can fairly safely be assumed to be salient in virtually any political system, the same being true of patronage and repression when delimiting the argument to only encompass autocratic systems. Only ethnicity may be regarded as potentially problematic in this regard, as not all party systems build upon ethnic cleavages. And what about those potentially important identities that are missing from the calculus? Well, seeing how the right-left party scale that is used to model the ideological dimension is also known to map onto a corresponding value dimension of conservatism-radicalism, the potential of Magaloni's theory to track various political identities may in fact be considerably larger than one might think at first glance, even though the theory does not allow for an explicit analysis of this in its current formulation.

[26] Indeed, a majority of these cases has to be eliminated from the analysis as their lack of political parties altogether or the considerable number of independent candidates that characterise their elections defy my measure of competitiveness.

4. Data, operationalisation and the method

The rationale of this section is to form a methodological basis for the empirical analysis of voter heterogeneity and electoral competitiveness that is to follow in chapter five. To this purpose, the chapter unfolds as follows. The first section presents and discusses the choice of data and operationalisation for the universe of cases and the variables. The second section examines the method and the challenges that arise from using a regression analysis with so-called time-series cross-sectional data. In the course of both these subsections, the chapter also addresses some of the methodological shortcomings of earlier studies of electoral autocracy, and seeks to improve upon these by introducing novel data and more rigorous methodological tools.

4.1. Data and variables

Drawing on a long and venerable tradition in comparative politics, this thesis operates with so-called aggregate data. Understood as numerical depictions of macro-level social processes, such data are considered particularly well-suited for the task that lies at the heart of the current investigation, namely that of tracing general patterns involving various collective actors across multiple countries (Lauth, Pickel, and Pickel 2009, 87–90). Obviously, the choice of using aggregate data is natural also for the simple reason that no survey data are available for such an extensive time period and such an eclectic group of countries as the one employed here.

In spite of these considerations, this type of data also harbours some potential caveats that are worth discussing before moving on to present the actual datasets and the individual variables. As Lauth, Pickel and Pickel (2009, 89–90) explain, aggregate data analyses tend to suffer from two distinct problems, which both stem from their reliance on datasets that have habitually not been created with the particular research project in mind. This may, on the one hand, compromise the reliability of the data as the scholar has no means by which to check the data and the coding for errors. On the other, different datasets may comprise different, country-specific measures of the same phenomena that are not by default compatible with one another. Unemployment or inflation rates are in other words not necessarily comparable across countries and datasets.

There are also additional problems with the choice of data and the choice of indicators. Above all, it must be realised that many of the phenomena central to the study at hand are not only exceedingly complex and not readily quantifiable, but also covert and

secretive by nature, thus complicating the collection of reliable data. Even though I seek to mitigate these problems to as high a degree as possible by using only a limited number of datasets and measures that are commonly employed in the literature on electoral autocracy, concerns of validity and reliability cannot be wholly eliminated.[27] In the words of Schedler (2009b, 188), non-democratic elections are haunted by "irritating mixtures of noise and silence, rhetoric and rumor, absolute certainty and absolute distrust" which spill over to "deep epistemological uncertainties". In less eloquent terms, this signalises that the variables employed in this thesis to measure such phenomena as electoral closeness, manipulation and fraud not only constitute a rather constricted selection of all the various strategies that are open to the relevant actors even in the light of Magaloni's (2008) theory; they must also – at best – be considered proxy indicators.

A final point worth considering is the debate evolving around "ecological regression". At the heart of this dispute lies the claim that the use of essentially macro-level data to investigate essentially micro-level processes amounts to an "ecological fallacy". In this view, studies based on macro-data are considered biased as only individual-level data (i.e. survey data) are believed to produce accurate inferences about processes involving individuals (e.g. Robinson 1950). Although this critique is undergirded by the fact that analyses of voting behaviour carried out with data from different levels of aggregation tend indeed to produce diverging results (Scarbrough 1991, 361), this observation does not resolve the matter unambiguously in favour of survey data. Quite on the contrary, it has led some scholars to accuse studies relying on individual-level data of falling prey to an "individual fallacy". In this light, macro-level data emerge as valid while micro-level data are deemed biased by people's subjective assessments on the grounds that these are actually endogenous to the vote choice, that is, rather a consequence than a cause of it (e.g. Erikson 2004; Kramer 1983; van der Eijk et al. 2007).

This ongoing debate appears to allow for a twofold conclusion about the choice of data in this thesis. On the one hand, because neither macro- nor micro-level data can be considered inherently superior when studying voter behaviour, the use of aggregate data must be regarded a ceteris paribus valid approach. On the other, because macro- and micro-data nevertheless appear to yield slightly diverging results, the decision to use aggregate-level data is at the same time likely to influence the conclusions of the inves-

[27] A measure is considered reliable if it yields constant results, whereas it qualifies as valid if it measures that which it is intended to measure (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 25).

tigation at hand. The level of aggregation may in other words constitute a source of discrepancy between the findings of this thesis with its focus on the macro-level, and those of Magaloni's original study with its emphasis of the micro-level.

4.1.1. Universe of cases

In order to test the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter, I compile a time-series cross-sectional dataset – a dataset that combines a temporal dimension with a spatial one for each unit (Wooldridge 2009, 10) – which covers all structurally competitive elections held at the national level in authoritarian regimes between 1974 and 2006. Deviating slightly from the definition by Hyde and Marinov (2010), the unit of analysis – an election – is understood as a race for either the national executive or legislative body, where the casting of ballots has began on election day, although the elections may later have been cancelled, postponed or annulled (see also Hyde and Marinov 2009, 14–16). The chosen time frame reflects in turn the empirical and theoretical associations between electoral authoritarianism and the third wave of democratisation, even though the availability of data forces me to right-hand censor the series.

The universe of cases is created by merging together two datasets which both operationalise one of the twin aspects of elections that are of interest to this thesis, namely electoral competition and authoritarianism. Thinking back to the discussion in section 2.1, competition was identified as a necessary structural prerequisite for competitiveness. As Hyde and Marinov (2010, 10–17) and Bogaards (2007) show, however, students of electoral authoritarianism have, in the absence of an appropriate measure with which to gauge this pivotal feature, been struggling to approximate its presence with various suboptimal strategies. Existent studies have thus tried to infer the existence of competition, for example, from outcome based measures that exclude elections in which the incumbent wins by a certain margin (e.g. Diamond 2002; Magaloni 2008); from more general aggregated datasets (e.g. Brownlee 2009a) such as Freedom House (2011), Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2010) or the Dataset of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001); or from novel taxonomies reflecting qualitative differences between regimes such as the level of repression or media control (e.g. Levitsky and Way 2010a).

Unfortunately, all of these strategies are fraught with problems. Thus, the first one conflates competition with competitiveness, establishes arbitrary vote or seat thresholds, and risks committing a selection bias known as coding on the dependent variable (see

King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 129–132).[28] The second alternative in turn utilises indices that have not been designed to screen between competitive and non-competitive elections, and whose rankings conflate theoretically relevant electoral events with non-relevant ones. Finally, the third strategy by necessity implies making subjective evaluations about how much repression or media control is sufficient to quench competition (Hyde and Marinov 2010, 10–17).

The National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy dataset (hereafter NELDA) by Hyde and Marinov (2010) allows me to improve upon the methodological foundation of the literature by providing a clear set of rules with which to delineate the universe of competitive elections. NELDA constitutes a first attempt at an election-based measure for separating competitive elections from non-competitive ones, and although the dataset has on the grounds of its newness not been broadly used yet, tests concerning its face validity and inter-coder reliability speak in its favour (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009, 17–19), as do its simple and clear coding rules alongside its broad scope. At the moment, NELDA (v.2) comprises over 2000 election events between 1945 and 2006 in all independent countries with a population of more than 500,000. Apart from measuring competition, the dataset also features over fifty binary variables that gauge various aspects of the elections such as whether the incumbent ran and whether fraud occurred. Because the data have been culled from a variety of sources, the reader is referred to the NELDA codebook for a more detailed listing of sources used.

In line with the conceptualisation presented earlier in chapter two, Hyde and Marinov (2010, 18–19) measure competition as the joint product of three binary attributes. Elections are thus coded as competitive if they prompt affirmative answers to *all* of the following questions:

1. Is opposition allowed?
2. Are multiple parties legal?

[28] An excellent example of the problems that arise from coding on the dependent variable is provided by the study of Roessler and Howard (2008), which seeks to explain the regime reproducing effects of elections in hegemonic authoritarian regimes. To begin with, Roessler and Howard operationalise hegemonic regimes as systems scoring 3 or higher on the Freedom House, or five or lower on the Polity IV scale, and in which the winner of the elections gains more than 70 per cent of the parliamentary seats or presidential vote. They then proceed to investigate the stability of these regimes relative to other regime types, and come to the conclusion that hegemonic regimes are in fact the most stable systems as the incumbents in their sample never lose a single election – something that would indeed be quite a feat seeing that 70 per cent of the seats or the vote would count as an overwhelming victory in practically any electoral system!

3. Is more than one candidate allowed on the ballot?

The gist of the third question should be self-evident, but the first two may seem confusingly similar. Despite their close affinity, they are in fact designed to tap into two different dimensions of competition. The first question captures situations in which several parties are legal, but these political entities are not independent of the regime – i.e. they constitute satellite parties – and no opposition consequently exists de facto. The second query in contrast pertains to cases in which opposition parties are not legally allowed to form, but opposition candidates are allowed to compete in practice. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that these criteria are not violated even if some (but not all) opposition parties are banned from taking part in the elections.

In order to filter out the elections which in accordance with the democracy definition provided in chapter two are held in autocratic regimes, I utilise the Democracy and Dictatorship dataset (hereafter DD). This index constitutes an update by Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010) of the democracy measure originally introduced by Alvarez et al. (1996) and used by Przeworski et al. (2000). In its present form, the index covers 199 independent countries between 1946 and 2008 which are coded dichotomously as either democratic or autocratic using data from Banks' (2011) Cross-National Time Series Data Archives. To recapitulate briefly, Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010, 69–72; see also Alvarez et al. 1996, 7–14 for a more detailed discussion) define democracy as a system in which governmental offices are filled by means of contested elections, and disaggregate this definition into three dimensions or attributes: ex-ante uncertainty, ex-post irreversibility and repeatability. Quoting the authors, this means that a regime must in operationalisational terms meet *all* of the following four rules to be coded as democratic, and conversely fall short of *at least one* criterion in order to qualify as autocratic:

1. The chief executive must be popularly elected or chosen by a body that was itself popularly elected.
2. The legislature must be popularly elected.
3. There must be more than one party competing in the elections.
4. An alternation in power under electoral rules identical to the ones that brought the incumbent to office must have taken place.

Again, the first two criteria dealing with offices being filled by elections appear clear enough, but the two latter points covering contestation require some elaboration. Defin-

ing a party as "an independent list of candidates presented to voters in elections" (Alvarez et al. 1996, 8), the "party-rule" obviously excludes no-party regimes, single-party regimes and regimes holding elections which present voters with only one list. However, this category also takes into account a special case of incumbents who, after having gained office via contested elections, exploit their power to do away with contestation. Because this goes against the repeatability rule, such regimes are coded as non-democratic starting from the beginning of the incumbent's term (ibid).

The "alternation-rule" is more complicated, with a problem arising from a small group of regimes that refute unambiguous coding. Although these regimes live up to the three first criteria, the ruling party has won at least two consecutive terms at the polls, and an alternation in power is therefore yet to materialise. As Alvarez et al. remark, it is under such circumstances impossible to observationally tell apart a democratic ruler who enjoys genuine popular support but would step down should he lose, from an autocratic incumbent who organises elections he will not lose and would not step down even if he were defeated, unless one is prepared to craft distinctions via means of what the authors term "subjective evaluations" concerning, for example, the severity of electoral fraud (ibid., 8–13; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010, 69–72).

Alvarez et al. provide a partial solution to this dilemma in the shape of retroactive coding. Should the incumbent party eventually lose and step down, the whole time during which the party has held office under the same broad electoral rules that brought it to power is coded as democratic. Yet even with such coding, some cases are bound to remain that cannot be classified without running the risk of entering either a false negative (type II error) or a false positive (type I error). The perfect example of this is Botswana, where the Botswana Democratic Party has been in power since 1966, achieving impressive victories in what most scholars consider free and fair elections. Even though many indices hence code the country as democratic, in the absence of "better" information such ambivalent cases are coded here as autocracies (Alvarez et al. 1996, 10–13).[29]

Retroactive coding is obviously not an ideal solution, as it rests upon the assumption that the incumbent's current behaviour is indicative of what he would have done at an earlier point in time. It may also introduce a small bias into the analysis in the shape of

[29] Although the authors enable the user of the dataset to recode or remove the cases in question, I decide to employ the original coding. In DD, the proportion of country years coded as autocratic for failing to live up to the alternation rule only is 11.9 per cent, with most of the instances being successor countries of the USSR (Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland 2010, 71).

false negatives, as pointed out by other scholars (e.g. Magaloni 2008, 34–35). Nevertheless, if one evaluates the DD dataset along the three dimensions set down by Munck and Verkuilen (2002) in their influential evaluation of alternative democracy measures – conceptualisation, measurement and aggregation – the index makes up for this shortcoming with a constantly good performance on all three fronts. Conceptually, it offers a clear, albeit minimalist, definition of democracy that is logically disaggregated into attributes. Operationally, it pays deference to issues of validity, reliability and replicability by employing well-considered indicators and providing transparent as well as detailed coding rules, and by making the used data public. Finally as far as aggregation goes, it uses a simple additive rule that is grounded in theory (see also Adcock and Collier 2001; Bernhagen 2009; Collier and Adcock 1999).

In this view, DD fares very well when compared to its two most serious rivals, the Freedom House (2011) and the Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2010) indices. The many inadequacies of these two – starting with the conceptualisation of democracy as "freedom" (FH) or as "patterns of authority" (Polity); continuing with the subjective and constantly changing coding rules of FH and the inclusion of redundant attributes in Polity; and leading up to their opaque and arbitrary aggregation into a 7-point (FH) and a 21-point (Polity) scale respectively – have received sufficient attention in the literature so as not to demand a thorough discussion here (compare Bernhagen 2009; Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010; Coppedge 2002; Gleditsch and Ward 1997; Lauth 2004; Marshall et al. 2002; Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Müller and Pickel 2007).[30]

Combining NELDA with DD yields a total of 422 observations within the specified time period. However, a number of elections have to be omitted from the analysis due to insufficient data. Several elections, including all those held in Bahrain, Jordan and Syria are also excluded on the grounds that these feature no identifiable political parties, and the degree of competitiveness can thus not be measured with the instruments employed in this thesis. After these omissions, 381 elections in 84 countries as listed in Table 4.1 remain.

[30] Another bone of contention with regard to using DD arises from Alvarez et al. (1996) using a dichotomous measure instead of a graded one (Collier and Adcock 1999, 538), which has rekindled an old debate about the concept validity and measurement reliability of competing democracy indices (compare e.g. Bollen 1980; Bollen and Jackman 1989; Coppedge and Reinicke 1990; Dahl 1971; Doorenspleet 2005; Elkins 2000; Geddes 1999; Sartori 1970).

Table 4.1. *List of elections included in the analysis*

Afghanistan		1997	L	1987	L	Ghana	
2004	P	1998	P	1990	L	1992	C
Algeria		2002	L	2005	C	Guatemala	
1991	L	2005	P	El Salvador		1982	C
1995	P	Cambodia		1974	L	1985	C
1997	L	1998	L	1976	L	Guinea	
2002	L	2003	L	1977	P	1993	P
2004	P	Cameroon		1978	P	1995	L
Angola		1992	C	Equatorial Guinea		1998	P
1992	C	1997	C	1993	L	2002	L
Azerbaijan		2002	L	1996	P	2003	P
1992	P	2004	P	1999	L	Guinea-Bissau	
1993	P	Central African Rep.		2002	P	1994	C
1998	P	1981	P	2004	L	1999	C
2003	P	2005	C	Ethiopia		Guyana	
Bangladesh		Chad		1995	L	1980	L
1978	P	1996	P	2000	L	1985	L
1979	L	1997	L	2005	L	1992	L
1981	P	2001	P	Fiji		1997	L
Belarus		2002	L	1977	L	2001	L
1994	P	2006	P	1977	L	2006	L
2001	P	Chile		1982	L	Haiti	
2006	P	1989	C	1987	L	1988	P
Bolivia		Comoros		2001	L	1990	C
1978	P	1996	C	2006	L	2000	C
1980	P	Congo, Rep.		Gabon		2006	C
1980	L	1989	L	1990	L	Honduras	
Bosnia and Herze-		2002	C	1993	P	1981	C
govina		Congo, Democratic		1996	L	Indonesia	
1996	C	Rep. of		1998	P	1977	L
1998	P	2006	C	2001	L	1982	L
2000	L	Cote d'Ivoire		2005	P	1987	L
2002	C	1990	C	2006	L	1992	L
2006	P	1995	C	Gambia, The		1997	L
Botswana		2000	C	1977	L	Iran, Islamic Rep.	
1974	L	Cyprus		1982	C	2000	L
1979	L	1976	L	1987	C	2001	P
1984	L	1981	L	1992	C	2004	L
1989	L	Djibouti		1996	C	2005	P
1994	L	1992	L	1997	C	Iraq	
1999	L	1993	P	2001	P	2005	L
2004	L	1997	L	2002	L	Kazakhstan	
Brazil		1999	P	2006	P	1995	L
1974	L	2003	L	Georgia		1999	P
1978	L	Ecuador		1992	L	2004	L
1982	L	1978	P	1995	P	2005	P
Burkina Faso		Egypt, Arab Rep.		1999	L	Kenya	
1978	C	1979	L	2000	P	1992	C
1992	L	1984	L	2003	L	1997	C

Table 4.1. *(Continued)*

Korea, Rep.		2002	L	1993	C	Thailand	
1978	L	Mozambique		1998	L	1976	L
1981	L	1994	C	Serbia		Togo	
1985	L	1999	C	1992	L	1993	P
1987	L	2004	C	1992	L	1994	L
Kyrgyz Rep.		Namibia		1996	L	1998	P
1995	P	1994	C	Sierra Leone		2002	L
2000	P	1999	C	1977		2003	P
Lebanon		2004	C	Singapore		2005	P
2005	L	Nicaragua		1976	L	Tunisia	
Lesotho		1974	P	1980	L	1979	L
1993	L	Niger		1984	L	1981	L
1998	L	1996	C	1988	L	1986	L
2002	L	1999	C	1991	L	1989	L
Liberia		Nigeria		1997	L	1994	L
1985	C	1983	C	2001	L	1999	C
1997	C	Pakistan		2006	L	2004	L
2005	C	1977	L	South Africa		Uganda	
Madagascar		2002	L	1974	L	2006	C
1992	P	Panama		1975	L	Uruguay	
Malaysia		1984	C	1977	L	1984	C
1974	L	Paraguay		1981	L	Uzbekistan	
1978	L	1978	C	1984	L	1991	P
1982	L	1983	C	1987	L	Yemen, Rep.	
1986	L	1988	C	1989	L	1993	L
1990	L	Peru		1994	L	1997	L
1999	L	1990	C	1999	L	1999	P
2004	L	1995	C	2004	L	2003	L
Mauritania		2000	C	Sri Lanka		2006	P
1992	C	Philippines		1977	L	Zambia	
1996	L	1978	L	1982	P	1991	C
1997	P	1981	P	1988	P	1996	C
2001	L	1984	L	Sudan		2001	C
2003	P	Russia		2000	P	2006	C
2006	L	1991	P	Taiwan		Zimbabwe	
Mexico		1993	L	1989	L	1974	L
1976	L	1995	L	1992	L	1977	L
1979	L	1996	P	1995	L	1979	L
1982	C	1999	L	Tajikistan		1980	L
1985	L	2000	P	1991	P	1985	L
1988	C	2003	L	1994	P	1990	C
1991	L	2004	P	1999	P	1995	L
1994	C	Rwanda		2000	L	1996	P
1997	L	2003	C	2006	P	2000	L
Morocco		Senegal		Tanzania		2002	P
1984	L	1978	C	1995	C	2005	L
1993	L	1983	C	2000	C		
1997	L	1988	C	2005	C		

P = Presidential election, L = Legislative election, C = Concurrent elections within a year

Note: The total number of elections does not add up to 381, as some countries (i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Africa) organise multiple elections for the same office.

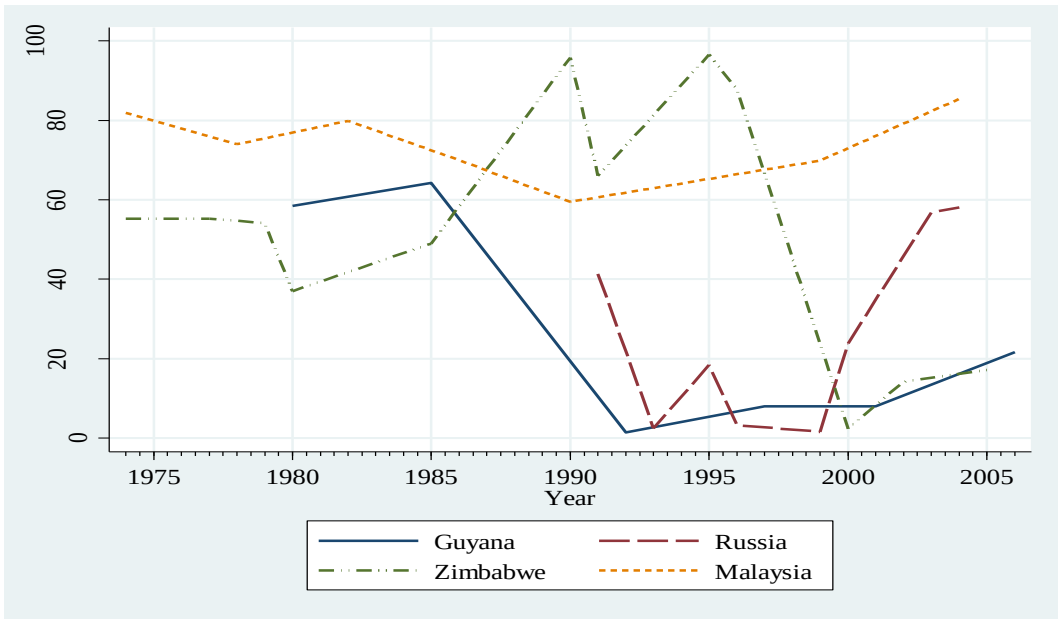
Of these elections, 149 are presidential and 231 parliamentary. Some 48.3 per cent of the cases are from Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Eastern Europe and Latin America with 14.2 and 12.3 per cent respectively. The distribution of cases in time clearly mirrors the progress of the third wave of democratisation: while only 11.3 per cent of the elections were held in the 1970s, this number rises to 20.2 per cent in the next decade and peaks at 39.6 per cent in the 1990s before dropping to 28.8 per cent in the 2000s.

4.1.1. Dependent variable

The dependent variable, *electoral competitiveness*, was conceptualised in chapter two as variation in electoral outcomes caused by shifting voting patterns (Strom 1989, 285). Although scholars have suggested several competing measures for this phenomenon (compare Aistrup 2004; Bond 1983; Foley and Steedly 1980; Patterson and Caldeira 1984; Sartori 1976), it is here operationalised as margins of victory. For Strom (1989, 285–287) and Schedler (2008, 11), electoral closeness is the most intuitive and useful measure across different electoral systems. Lindberg (2006, 39–40) and Bogaards (2000, 165) point in turn to the fact that this measure outperforms its most serious rivals, the Laakso-Taagepera (1979) index of the effective number of parties and the ratio of votes, which both suffer from mathematical problems that render the measures unreliable (see also Dunleavy and Boucek 2003). Not surprisingly, margins of victory is thus the most frequently employed indicator of competitiveness in the literature on electoral authoritarianism (e.g. Greene 2010; Roessler and Howard 2008; Schedler 2009b).

Following these approaches, *the competitiveness of presidential elections* is measured as the difference in vote shares between the winner and the runner-up as a percentage of total valid votes in the first round. Conversely, *the competitiveness of legislative elections* is quantified as the difference in seat shares between the largest and the second largest party in per cents. These measures are then combined in order to form the dependent variable *Margin of victory*. As can be seen from Figure 4.1, which displays the margins of victory in national-level elections for selected countries, the new variable varies between 0 and 100 per cent, and is calculated using data from the election data handbooks of Nohlen et al. (2005a, 2005b; 2001a, 2001b; 2000; 2010), complemented for newer election-years with data from the IFES Election guide (2011), the African elections database (2011) and the Inter-parliamentary Union (Various years).

Figure 4.1. *Margins of victory for selected countries, 1974-2006*



On an explanatory note, focusing only on the first round of presidential elections is motivated by concerns of validity. As Lindberg (2006, 39–40) explains, the first round tends to be more reflective of the actual level of competitiveness in two-round electoral systems. Moreover, this procedure renders the results compatible with the outcomes of presidential elections that require only a simple majority. The availability of data in turn explains why the share of seats as opposed to the share of votes is utilised with regard to legislative elections. Not only are vote shares often missing; there is, furthermore, reason to believe that even when these figures are reported, they tend to be unreliable due to irregularities and problems with counting and voter registration. Seat shares are consequently expected to yield a more accurate picture of the actual level of competitiveness (Lindberg 2006, 41).

4.1.2. Independent variables

The first hypothesis concerning voter behaviour and its consequences for the margins of victory states that voters cast their ballot for the dictator if they agree with his economic policies. In her book, Magaloni (2008, chapter 6) probes this relationship with the help of survey data, but for known reasons, this course of action is not open to me. Because I thus lack the means by which to explore whether the voters agree with the ideological

standpoints of the ruling party at the micro-level, I instead rely on two aggregate-level proxy indicators.

As Powell and Whitten (1993, 404) discuss, it is well known that the ideological stances of right- and leftwing parties tend to translate into diverging economic policies. Rightist parties are, for instance, known to be more concerned with inflation than leftist parties, which in turn prioritise unemployment (see also Lijphart 1984). Moreover, these approaches have tended to attract different political clienteles, with rural electorates typically favouring right-leaning parties and the urban working-class constituting the traditional stronghold of left-leaning parties (Powell and Whitten 1993, 404).

These patterns enable me to test the impact of the voters' ideological affiliations on electoral competitiveness, for the purpose of which two indicators are created. The first variable, *Government identity*, is an ordinal measure from the Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001) that I complement using data from Keesing's *Political parties of the world* (Day and Degenhardt Various years) and gauges the ideological orientation of the ruling party with the help of three categories – right, centre and left. The second variable, *Urban population*, measures the proportion of people residing in urban areas as a percentage of the total population, and is derived from the World Bank's (2011) World Development Indicators. I then allow *Government identity* to interact with *Urban Population* by transforming the former into two indicator (dummy) variables – *Government identity right* and *Government identity left* – which are multiplied in turn with the latter variable. The guiding assumption here is that right-wing parties win by greater margins than left-wing parties if the electorate is predominantly rural, whereas left-wing parties are expected to benefit more from an urban electorate than their right-wing counterparts.[31]

The first hypothesis further posits that increasing ethnic fractionalisation may be linked to smaller margins of victory as the number of competing preferences increases. The standard measure for ethnicity in the literature on comparative politics has long been the index of ethno-linguistic fractionalisation (EFL). However, as this index is

[31] Because *Urban Population* will also be used to test the fourth hypothesis, it appears ill-advised to construct the interaction variables using some other indicator that, for example, builds upon the distribution of labour as this would result in severe multicollinearity, viz. correlation between the independent variables that may undermine statistical power and bias the parameters of the model (e.g. Graham 2003). Another reason for not using a variable that measures employment in the agricultural or industrial sector is that the ratio of available data would be extremely low: on average, only some 27 per cent of the country years in my analysis would be covered.

based on the *Atlas Narodov Mira* originally compiled by Soviet ethnographers in 1964, the data are not only out-dated, but also display severe coding inaccuracies (Fearon 2003). Furthermore, the Herfindahl concentration index that is used to calculate the degree of fractionalisation has often been accused of insensitivity (Posner 2004). Even though newer contributions have sought to remedy some of these flaws (e.g. Alesina et al. 2003; Fearon 2003), these alternatives are not well suited for my research design as they continue to utilise the Herfindahl index and employ only cross-sectional data, that is, data that have been collected from one single year.

Fortunately, Ellingsen (2000) offers raw data on the ethnic composition of all the countries relevant for my study. The data are collected from multiple points in time during the interval 1945–1993 using the Handbook of Nations, Britannica Book of the Year, and the Demographic Yearbook and have been interpolated for missing years, thus allowing me to circumvent the above-mentioned problems. Following Ellingsen (ibid.) and Lee et al. (2004), I define an ethnic group as being based on "ascriptive differences" that both the members of the group as well as outsiders regard as being relevant to its identity, and measure ethnic pluralism in two ways.[32] *Ethnic first* measures the size of the largest ethnic group as a percentage of the total population, and is expected to be positively associated with the margins of victory, not least because the ruling government is typically associated with the largest ethnicity (Greene 2010, 816). Conversely, *Ethnic groups* captures a second dimension of ethnicity by gauging the number of ethnic groups that make up at least five per cent of the total population, and is in turn expected to be negatively associated with the margin of victory.

ln(GDP) is in turn included to gauge the impact of wealth on electoral competitiveness. This variable measures a nation's real gross domestic product per capita (in constant 2005 international dollars) using data from the Penn World Table 7.0 Chain Series (Heston, Summers, and Aten 2011). I transform the variable into the natural logarithm in order to take into account the possibility that its effect is not constant at all levels. Although GDP per capita is the standard measure for development in comparative politics, it can be criticised on the grounds that it reveals little about how the wealth is distributed among the citizens and is thus less than optimal for gauging heterogeneity. It

[32] Ellingsen (2000) and Lee et al. (2004) utilise a third dimension, namely the size of the second largest ethnic group as a percentage of the total population. However, due to high correlations between the different measures of ethnicity and ensuing problems of multicollinearity, I choose to omit this dimension.

may consequently be expected to yield biased inferences in the case of countries where GDP is high, but the wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small elite. In my research design, GDP per capita is nevertheless preferable to the alternative – the GINI inequality index – seeing how it is a virtual impossibility to attain data for the latter for but a fraction of the period covered by my analysis. In line with the second hypothesis, higher levels of development are by increasing socio-economic heterogeneity expected to be related to smaller margins of victory.

Hypothesis number three deals with the effects that the state of the economy has on electoral competitiveness. Pertaining to this point, Magaloni (2008) assumes the voters to form their judgements on the basis of three components, namely prior knowledge, the current state of the economy and the campaign promises of the respective parties. In doing so, the voters may obviously pay attention to several different aspects of the economy, but I have – following Magaloni and for the sake of parsimony – decided to focus solely on economic growth.[33]

Concerning the operationalisation of these three components, the last one clearly poses the same predicament for me as for Magaloni (ibid., 204–205): because my data do not allow me to test the impact of campaign promises, this aspect is dropped from the analysis. With regard to the first two components, the unavailability of survey data once more hinders me from using Magaloni's original measures. While Magaloni (ibid., chapter 7) gauges prior knowledge by calculating an average of the economic growth each survey respondent has experienced during his or her politically active life and measures the current state of the economy with the help of the respondents' individual assessments (see also Choi 2007), I am compelled to rely on aggregate-level proxies.

Since no data on growth rates with which to measure the current state of the economy are available on a monthly basis, it becomes sensible to combine the first two components into one single variable, this being commonly done in the literature on economic voting by measuring economic change in the year preceding the elections (Greene 2010). A one-year-lag is, however, clearly too short to capture Magaloni's notion of how the voters' prior knowledge influences their vote choice. Fortunately, Reuter and Gandhi (2011) propose some alternative measures for this, the first of which

[33] If included into the baseline model as an alternative measure, the annual rate of inflation, measured as the GDP deflator in percentages and lagged by one year using data from the World Bank's (2011) World Development Indicators, had a negative effect on the margin of victory as predicted. The variable failed, however, to reach statistical significance.

gauges the average growth rate over the life of each regime. As this averaging would in my analysis result in highly uneven lags ranging between 1 and 68 years, while in many cases also reducing the variance of the indicator considerably, the second alternative focusing on the election cycle seems more appealing. *Economic growth* thus measures the average growth in GDP per capita in percentages using data from the World Bank's (2011) World Development Indicators during a period that begins in the year of the previous election and ends in the year prior to the relevant election. If no previous election has been held, the period begins five years before the election at hand (Reuter and Gandhi 2011, 93). Following Magaloni, higher growth rates are expected to be related to higher margins of victory as they serve to cancel out the impact of voter heterogeneity.

Table 4.2. *Descriptive statistics of variables included in the analysis*

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.	*N*
Margin of victory	46.69	29.52	0	100	381
Government identity	2.12	0.89	1	3	378
Ethnic first	71.07	21.44	21	100	370
Ethnic groups	2.71	1.48	1	8	354
ln(GDP)	7.74	1.04	5.13	10.71	375
Economic growth	3.14	6.63	-22.6	41.11	371
Urban population	43.67	19.03	7.8	100	378
Repression	4.57	1.07	2	7	381
Government consumption	14.92	6.72	3	42	354
Fraud	0.56	0.49	0	1	372
Media bias	0.37	0.48	0	1	332
Previous election	0.02	0.32	-72.66	69.30	312
Boycott	0.24	0.43	0	1	378
Protest	0.21	0.41	0	1	364
Opposition fragmentation	0.53	0.32	0	1	362
Aid	48.21	52.74	-1.00	272.48	350
Foreign direct investment	2.83	7.28	-39.73	53.56	333
Singapore and Malaysia	0.03	0.19	0	1	381

Note: See text for definition of variables and sources used.

The already described variable *Urban population* is also utilised on its own to test the fourth hypothesis, which suggests that there is a systematic relationship between urbanisation and competitiveness. The assumption here is that increasing urbanisation

entails increasing heterogeneity, and it hence has a negative impact on the margin of victory.

Lastly in order to measure the effect of repression, I make use of the Freedom House (2011) civil liberties scale (CL). Following the original coding, *Repression* constitutes an ordinal level scale consisting of seven categories with larger values indicating increasing coercion and measures four areas of liberties, namely freedom of expression and belief; associational and organisational rights; rule of law; as well as personal autonomy and individual rights. I lag the variable by one year in order to avoid issues of endogeneity, that is, reversed causality between the dependent and the independent variable. Although the CL index as a part of the composite Freedom House index has already been shown to be suffering from certain methodological drawbacks (see section 4.1.1.), its usage is recommended by the fact that it is the only measure that offers a sufficient coverage of countries in both time and space (compare Cingranelli and Richards 2010). The fifth hypothesis assumes that the margin of victory will increase as the level of repression increases as repression, too, mitigates the effect of heterogeneity. Descriptive statistics for *Repression* as well as all the other variables are displayed in Table 4.2.

4.1.1. Control variables

Besides testing the effect of voter heterogeneity, I add several control variables that aim at taking into account the actions of the dictator and the opposition, as well as the impact of factors that are external to the regime. To cover the role of the dictator, I introduce four variables. To start with, I include an indicator for the incumbent autocrat's resource monopoly, *Government consumption*. As Greene (2010, 814) notes, this factor is not easily captured in one single measure, and my variable must thus be considered a rather crude proxy.[34] As such, it measures general government final consumption including expenditures for purchases, services and wages as a percentage of GDP using data from the World Bank's (2011) World Development Indicators. The assumption is

[34] Drawing on the vast literature on rentier states (e.g. Ross 2001), an alternative indicator, *Rents*, was also included to measure oil rents as a percentage of GDP using data from the World Bank's (2011) World Development Indicators under the assumption that higher rent incomes would help the dictator to maintain higher margins of victory. This variable failed to reach standard levels of statistical significance.

that the more a government can afford to consume on different forms of patronage, the larger the margin of victory.

Next, I include two dichotomous variables from NELDA (Hyde and Marinov 2010). The first one, *Fraud*, taps the incumbent's manipulative practices and takes on the value 1 if there are reported concerns about the integrity of the upcoming elections before election day, 0 otherwise. *Media bias* is in turn intended to control for the incumbent's grip of the media, and is coded 1 if the media is reportedly biased in favour of the ruling incumbent or when the media is totally controlled by the government, 0 otherwise. Since electoral fraud and restrictions on the freedom of the media are used to fix the elections in favour of the dictator, both are expected to have a positive impact on the margin of victory.

Lastly, *Previous election* is intended to proxy the dictator's perceived electoral vulnerability. Modifying a measure developed by Reuter and Gandhi (2011), the variable tracks changes in the vote share of the incumbent (party) in percentages since the previous election. If the dictator, for instance, wins 95 per cent of the vote at time *t* and 80 per cent at time *t* + 1, the change at the latter time is 95–80 = 15.[35] Following Reuter and Gandhi's coding, the first elections after single-party rule receive a value of 100, whereas the first elections after independence use the vote share of the incumbent (party) in elections for territorial or colonial assemblies. If no prior presidential elections exist, the measure uses the vote share of the incumbent's party in the previous legislative elections, and vice versa. Data for this variable are culled from Nohlen et al. (2005a, 2005b; 2001a, 2001b; 2000; 2010), the IFES Election guide (2011), the African elections database (2011) and the Inter-parliamentary Union (Various years). As positive values signify a net loss in votes and thus constitute a sign of vulnerability on the part of the dictator, *Previous election* should stand in a negative relationship to the margin of victory.

The behaviour of the opposition is in turn modelled with the help of three variables. The dichotomous indicator *Boycott* is coded 1 if at least one of the opposition parties boycotted the elections, 0 otherwise, and uses data from the NELDA dataset (Hyde and

[35] Reuter and Gandhi (2011) actually measure change in the incumbent's electoral fortunes over the two previous elections. While this practice would in theory yield a much more comprehensive picture of the dictator's electoral invincibility and vulnerability, it would in practice reduce the number of observations radically from 290 to 196. Substituting *Previous election* with the more rigorous variant in the regression analysis (results not shown) yields substantially highly similar results.

Marinov 2010). As discussed earlier, opposition boycotts may have a significant impact on the degree of competitiveness although the factor is not explicitly covered by Magaloni's argument. Thus, controlling for this element in the empirical analysis seems advisable, even at the risk of it constituting something of an ad hoc insert from the theoretical point of view. In this vein, it should be noted that the upcoming analysis only takes into account the short-term effects of boycotts, i.e. their consequences for the most proximate election, but makes no assumptions about their long-term effects on the electoral fortunes of the opposition. Boycotts are in this line assumed to have a positive impact on the margin of victory.

Similarly, the binary variable *Protest* receives a value of 1 if the government's handling of the elections leads to post-electoral protests, 0 otherwise, and is derived from NELDA (Hyde and Marinov 2010). Following Magaloni's (2008) theory and to avoid endogeneity, the variable is lagged by one election cycle – the elections at time *t* will in other words be affected by an eventual protest at time *t* - 1. Contrary to the theory that delimits the tactic to a very narrowly defined situation, however, the variable also includes protests that do not involve allegations of electoral fraud, since adherence to this criterion would have reduced the number of cases so radically as to render a meaningful statistical inquiry futile.[36] Unfortunately, this change does little to alleviate the inherent causal ambivalence of this tactic in Magaloni's theory, and the inclusion of *Protest* in the analysis must consequently be viewed as an explorative act since its impact on the margin of victory can come to work in either direction.

In order to tap into the coordination dilemmas of the opposition, then, I include the proxy variable *Opposition fragmentation* which aims at measuring the unity of the opposition parties. Following Reuter and Gandhi (2011), I measure fragmentation by dividing the vote share (in presidential elections) or seat share (in legislative elections) of the largest opposition party (p_1) by the total sum of all opposition parties (p_i), $p_1/\sum p_i$. The measure thus varies between 0 and 1, with the latter value indicating a unified opposition. The variable is calculated using data from Nohlen et al. (2005a, 2005b; 2001a, 2001b; 2000; 2010), the IFES Election guide (2011), the African elections database (2011), as well as the Inter-parliamentary Union (Various years). A unified opposition

[36] Indeed, when using data from NELDA (Hyde and Marino 2010), only 52 protests in my data involve such allegations and in all but one of these it can be assumed that electoral fraud was common knowledge amongst the voters.

is likely to ease co-ordination with the electorate, and is therefore expected to have a negative impact on the margin of victory.

The effect of external factors is in turn measured using two variables. The first one, *Aid*, gauges the percentage change in net official development aid received by a regime as a percentage of gross national investment in the two years before the election. Data for this variable come from the World Bank's (2011) World Development Indicators, and since dependency on foreign aid is in line with Magaloni's argument thought to decrease the incumbent's incentives to commit fraud and oppress the opposition, the variable is expected to be negatively associated with the margin of victory.

In a similar vein, I also probe the effect of a regime's average net inflow of foreign direct investments as a percentage of GDP in the two years prior to the election at hand. Data for *Foreign direct investment* come from the World Bank's (2011) World Development Indicators, and since many investors can be expected to value political stability over democracy, FDI can be looked upon as an additional source of revenue for the dictator. The variable is consequently expected to have a positive impact on the margin of victory.

Finally, I add a dummy variable *Singapore and Malaysia* in order to control for these two countries in the analysis, as post-estimation tests reveal both to be outliers in terms of urbanisation and economic development.

4.2. Method and models

Since our interest lies in establishing the independent as well as combined effects of a number of explanatory variables on the dependent variable, while at the same time controlling for several intervening variables, a multiple regression analysis is clearly the method of choice. As has already been mentioned, however, the subsequent analysis employs *time-series cross-sectional data* (hereafter TSCS), also known as *longitudinal data*, which feature "repeated observations on fixed units" (Beck and Katz 1995, 634), typically a set of countries, N, that are observed over a number of years, T. This requires that the effects of voter heterogeneity on competitiveness be explored using a regression model that takes into account both the spatial and temporal dimension of the data. Since a basic linear multiple regression model only acknowledges the former, one may instead utilise a generic pooled multiple regression model (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 699):

$$y_{it} = \alpha + x'_{it}\beta + u_{it}; \qquad i = 1, \dots, N, \;\; t = 1, \dots, T \tag{4.1}$$

where y_{it} is a scalar dependent variable, α the intercept, x_{it} a $K \times 1$ vector of independent variables and u_{it} a scalar composite disturbance term, with *i* and *t* indexing country and time respectively.

Although TSCS data render the model slightly more complicated, employing this type of data is not without its benefits as they have in fact been shown to offer many advantages over purely cross-sectional or time-series data, and are as a result now commonly used throughout the field of comparative politics. For example, TSCS data help to increase the number of observations by multiplying N with T, producing in this fashion greater statistical leverage on the grounds of the subsequent increase in the degrees of freedom. On the other hand, they also serve to remedy the problem of unobserved variables by enabling the scholar to incorporate time invariant factors as well as the interaction of time and space into the analysis (Beck and Katz 2011, 332; Hsiao 2004, 3–8; Lauth, Pickel, and Pickel 2009, 113–115; Podestà 2002, 7–8; Worrall and Pratt 2004, 36).

Yet the pooled regression model in equation (4.1) also poses challenges, especially with regard to estimating the unknown parameters β. As is well known, the most commonly used estimator of linear regression models is ordinary least squares (OLS) (Cohen et al. 2003, 124). OLS quite simply implies fitting the optimal regression line to the data by minimising the sum of squared residuals (that is, the difference between the predicted and the observed values) and constitutes an unbiased, consistent and optimal – or best linear unbiased (BLUE) – estimator as long as the basic Gauss-Markov assumptions hold (Wooldridge 2009, 32, chapter 5).[37] With regard to being unbiased and consistent, these assumptions include that the independent variables are *exogenous*, i.e. that none of them are correlated with the error term, and that they display *no perfect multicollinearity* with one another. With regard to being optimal, OLS assumes the errors to be *independent and identically distributed* (iid).[38] This requires *homoscedasticity*, viz. that the variance of the error term is constant across all values of x, as well as *independ-*

[37] An unbiased estimator will yield estimates of the regression coefficients from a given sample that on average equal the true value in the population. A consistent estimator in turn has a sample distribution which approaches the true value of the estimate as the sample size approaches the infinite. Finally, an optimal or efficient estimator minimises the amount of variation around the true value of the estimate as measured in standard errors (Allison 1999, 120; Cohen et al. 2003, 124).

[38] The errors are in other words assumed to be spherical, that is (Beck 2001, 275):

$$E(\varepsilon_{it}\varepsilon_{js}) = \begin{cases} \sigma^2 & \text{if } i = j \text{ and } s = t \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

ent error processes, that is to say, that the errors are uncorrelated with one another (Cohen et al. 2003, chapter 4.3; Wooldridge 2009, chapter 3, 170).

If these criteria are violated, OLS runs the risk of turning biased, inconsistent and inefficient, while also suffering from incorrect standard errors, which reduces our ability to calculate confidence intervals and carry out statistical tests (Cohen et al. 2003, 119–120). Although these repercussions must be considered serious, issues in modelling TSCS data have received surprisingly little attention in the field of electoral authoritarianism so far (but see Greene 2010; Magaloni 2008; Reuter and Gandhi 2011; Teorell and Hadenius 2009). This raises some concerns about the robustness of earlier findings, as there is reason to believe that these conditions do not hold when working with longitudinal data that tend to undermine these assumptions in at least four distinct ways (Beck and Katz 1995, 636; Podestà 2002, 10–12; Worrall and Pratt 2004, 36–41):

First, TSCS data may cause the variance of the error processes to vary across units, giving rise to *heteroscedasticity*. Heteroscedasticity may arise, for instance, when the scale of the dependent variable differs across countries so that the margins of victory vary more, say, in Haiti than in Malaysia.

Second, error processes tend to be correlated across units, which generates *contemporaneous correlation* between the errors for country *i* and country *j* at time *t*. The errors for the Eastern European and Euro-Asian CIS countries might thus be expected to correlate with one another at any given point in time, although they are likely to remain independent of those for the geographically more distant Bolivia or Fiji.

Third, the errors are often correlated over time within units, which results in *serial correlation*. Thus, the degree of electoral competitiveness in, say, Tanzania in the 1990s can in part be used to explain the country's degree of competitiveness in the 2000s.

Fourth, there may be some time- and/or unit-constant factors – for example, legacies of political culture – that affect the outcome of interest in a given unit, but which have not been explicitly modelled. If the ensuing *unobserved heterogeneity* is not controlled for, the consequence is a form of omitted variable bias, which may render OLS inconsistent (see also Wooldridge 2002, chapter 10).

To make matters more complicated still, many of the "standard" approaches that have been developed to tackle these complications are by default ruled out because of

the panel-like nature of my data.[39] Accordingly, to use OLS with panel-corrected standard errors (PCSE) as proposed by Beck and Katz (1995) is unadvisable, as their accuracy crucially hinges on the number of observations per unit, and my panel contains an average of only 4.5 elections per country. Similarly, adding a lagged dependent variable to correct for serial correlation appears inappropriate (Beck and Katz 2011), since my panel is also extremely unbalanced, with many countries having experienced only a few electoral events occurring at very irregular intervals. This renders the lagged variable atheoretical as it assumes the impact of the regressors on the dependent variable to decline geometrically over time, instead of only affecting the most proximate election (Golder 2006, 38; see also Beck 2001, 274). Finally, the data even render the abandonment of OLS in favour of certain alternative estimators problematic. In this vein, a population-averaged model such as the generalised estimating equation (GEE) approach risks producing inconsistent estimates of β because the panel features observations that are "missing at random" (MAR) as opposed to "missing completely at random" (MCAR) (Zorn 2001).[40]

Within these limits, earlier studies using electoral TSCS data with a country-to-year-ratio similar to mine have focused exclusively on correcting the standard errors by using *country-clustered robust standard errors* (i.e. Golder 2006; Reuter and Gandhi 2011). This simple approach is moderately attractive: although a Lagram-Multiplier test as described by Wooldridge (2002, 282–283) reveals no need to take serial correlation into consideration ($p = .79$), the robust standard errors would control for the presence of heteroscedasticity detected in the data by a modified Wald's test ($p < .001$).[41] This ap-

[39] Beck (2001, 273–274) makes a distinction between *TSCS data* and *panel data* with the former consisting of fixed units and a large T, while the latter constitutes a sample with a small T-to-N-ratio. In this view, my data are of a mixed breed as they constitute the population of competitive authoritarian elections but at the same time have an on-average small T in comparison to N.

[40] One of the most pressing problems with longitudinal data is the question of what to do with missing data. The standard solution to this dilemma – list-wise deletion, where the whole unit is omitted from the analysis if it displays a missing value on at least one of the variables – has been criticised on the grounds that it leads to a truncated sample (Beck and Katz 2011, 333). A more sophisticated alternative is offered by multiple imputation, which builds upon "extract[ing] relevant information from the observed portions of a data set via a statistical model, to impute multiple (around five) values for each missing cell, and to use these to construct multiple 'completed' data sets" (Honaker and King 2010, 561). However, although several advanced programmes now enable scholars to make use of this approach (see e.g. ibid.), the task of combining and analysing the resulting multiple datasets is still subject to considerable practical difficulties. Due to these complications, I have decided against multiple imputation even though this reduces the number of observations.

[41] Here, three first-order error processes were considered, as these typically suffice for annual data (Beck and Katz 2011, 337). While a Lagram-Multiplier test revealed no first-order autoregression (AR1), the second approach – the finite distributed lag (FDL) model – which assumes that "the impact of *x* sets in

proach is incapable of tackling contemporaneous correlation, however, although this is not likely to be much of a problem in my data. As Baltagi (2005) notes, contemporaneous correlation tends to be a problem in balanced macro panels, that is, when many countries organise elections in the same year. Unfortunately, none of the standard tests for cross-sectional dependence – e.g. Breusch and Pagan's (1980) Lagrange multiplier test of independence and Pesaran's (2004) cross-sectional dependence test – can be carried out to affirm this assumption because my panel is so highly unbalanced.

While correcting for the standard errors is certainly of pivotal importance, it implies a lack of attention paid to the issue of unobserved heterogeneity that is concerning, seeing how this matter has direct consequences for the choice of estimator. Thinking back to equation (4.1), a pooled OLS (POLS) model clearly harbours the assumption that all countries are homogeneous as concerns the factors affecting the dependent variable, which is revealed by the inclusion of the common intercept a. This may well be an unrealistic assumption; indeed, by carrying out an incremental F-test, the null-hypothesis of unit homogeneity in the cross-section dimension is clearly rejected ($p < .001$). As a subsequent F-test fails to reveal similar heterogeneity in the temporal dimension ($p = .75$), the ensuing omitted variable bias may be rectified by taking the unobserved heterogeneity into account in a *one-way individual-specific effects model*, which can, building upon the POLS model from equation (4.1), be expressed in matrix notation as (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 700):

$$y_{it} = \alpha_i + x'_{it}\beta + \varepsilon_{it}; \qquad i = 1, \dots, N, \;\; t = 1, \dots, T \tag{4.2}$$

where α_i represent the individual effects and ε_{it} an idiosyncratic error. Depending upon the relationship between α_i and the observed regressors, the model can be refined further and an estimator be chosen accordingly. As concerns the choice of model, two alternatives present themselves. If α_i are assumed to be correlated with x_{it}, a *fixed effects (FE) model* that treats the individual effects as unit-specific intercepts is called for – this amounts to estimating equation (4.2). Conversely, if α_i are assumed to be uncorrelated with x_{it}, one ought to chose a *random effects (RE) model* which uses a random intercept coefficient μ and, in line with the POLS model in equation (4.1), places the individual

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over two (or a few) periods but then dissipates completely" (ibid., 334) is de facto applied in the analysis as some of the independent variables are indeed assumed to function with a lag. The third alternative – a lagged dependent variable – has already been shown to be inappropriate for my research design (ibid.; see also Golder 2006, 38).

effects in the composite error, $u_{it} = \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it}$, and yields the following equation (ibid., 734):

$$y_{it} = \mu + x'_{it}\beta + u_{it}; \qquad i = 1, \dots, N, \;\; t = 1, \dots, T \tag{4.3}$$

Obviously, the choice between these two models is far from trivial. If the true model is indeed a FE model, a fixed effects estimator (*within*, *first differences*) must be used for robustness, as both OLS and the random effects estimator – *feasible generalised least squares* (FGLS) – will be inconsistent and biased due to the ensuing correlation between the regressors and the error term. If the true model is a RE model, both the fixed and random effects estimators as well as OLS will be consistent and unbiased; however, because the inclusion of the time-invariant α_i in the composite error will in fact end up generating serial correlation for a given country at time *t* and *s*, FGLS will be the most efficient estimator under the assumption that both α_i and ε_{it} are iid with the respective distributions $[0, \sigma_\alpha^2]$ and $[0, \sigma_\varepsilon^2]$, although the gain when compared to OLS need not be great (ibid., 700; Wooldridge 2002, 251–252).[42]

The central task is thus to establish whether or not fixed effects belong in the model. For this purpose, a Hausman test (Hausman 1978) is usually carried out under the null hypothesis that the individual effects are uncorrelated with the regressors, which in this instance yields a clearly non-significant result (p = .28). A problem with the test in its original formulation is, however, that it assumes RE to be fully efficient under H_0. This is obviously not the case when α_i or ε_{it} are non-iid (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 718–719; Wooldridge 2002, 288–291). With this in mind, I instead perform two panel-robust variants of the test as proposed by Wooldridge (ibid.) and Hoechle (2007) that are capable of dealing with non-spherical errors. Both tests yield essentially the same result, rejecting fixed effects in favour of random effects at the 5% level (p = .08 and p = .14).

This is a fortunate finding, for although RE models are often estimated with fixed effects estimators because their robustness is thought to make them "a more convincing tool for estimating ceteris paribus effects" (Wooldridge 2009, 493), they entail a serious loss of efficiency and are likely to yield imprecise estimates for variables that change slowly over time as these are conflated and eliminated with the time-invariant α_i (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 714–715; Wooldridge 2002, 286, 2009, 493).

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[42] On a clarifying note, Wooldridge's (2002) LM test mentioned earlier only tests for serial correlation in the idiosyncratic error term ε_{it}. The serial correlation here pertains to correlation between u_{it} and u_{is}.

As a Breusch-Pagan (1980) Lagrange multiplier test that probes the presence of random effects further supports the usage of RE over a simple POLS in terms of efficiency ($p < .001$), the following baseline random effects regression model could be used:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{MarginofVictory}_{it} = \mu + \beta_1 \text{GovernmentIdentity}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{UrbanPopulation}_{it} + \\ \beta_3 \text{GovernmentIdentity} \times \text{UrbanPopulation}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{EthnicFirst}_{it} + \\ \beta_5 \text{EthnicGroups}_{it} + +\beta_6 \ln(\text{GDP})_{it} + \beta_7 \text{EconomicGrowth}_{it} + \beta_8 \text{Repression}_{it} + \\ \beta_9 \text{SingaporeMalaysia}_{it} + u_{it} \qquad (4.4)\end{aligned}$$

On closer inspection, it becomes clear that this model is in need of some modification. As is common with quantitative studies of societal development, the indicators used to measure the various dimensions of this phenomenon tend to be inter-correlated. Although this does not bias the investigation altogether – remember that in order to be unbiased, OLS and FGLS only require that no *perfect* multicollinearity exists between the regressors – a high degree of multicollinearity does inflate the standard errors of the β coefficients. It will thus not only distort the statistical significance of the predictors and render them unpredictable by increasing the variance of their coefficients, but also reduce the overall explanatory power of the model (R^2) (Cohen et al. 2003, 419).

In the baseline model, multicollinearity may be a concern with regard to *ln(GDP)* and *Urban population* (mean VIF 2.15), as well as my two measures of ethnicity (mean VIF 2.63). I am somewhat reluctant to split up the two latter variables, as they are designed to go together and in fact loose all statistical significance without the controlling effect of the other; furthermore, if included into the same model, their behaviour remains constant across all models. Placing the first two into the same model does, on the other hand, seem to infuse the model with a considerable degree of unpredictability, which justifies their separation. I thus run two baseline models, Model 1:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{MarginofVictory}_{it} = \mu + \beta_1 \text{GovernmentIdentity}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{UrbanPopulation}_{it} + \\ \beta_3 \text{GovernmentIdentity} \times \text{UrbanPopulation}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{EthnicFirst}_{it} + \\ \beta_5 \text{EthnicGroups}_{it} + \beta_6 \text{EconomicGrowth}_{it} + \beta_7 \text{Repression}_{it} + \\ \beta_8 \text{SingaporeMalaysia}_{it} + u_{it} \qquad (4.5)\end{aligned}$$

and Model 2:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{MarginofVictory}_{it} = \mu + \beta_1 \text{EthnicFirst}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{EthnicGroups}_{it} + \beta_3 \ln(\text{GDP})_{it} + \\ \beta_4 \text{EconomicGrowth}_{it} + \beta_5 \text{Repression}_{it} + \beta_6 \text{SingaporeMalaysia}_{it} + u_{it} \qquad (4.6)\end{aligned}$$

which I estimate using *feasible generalised least squares* (FGLS), while employing country-clustered robust standard errors to take into account the non-spherical error structure. Generalised least squares works in all brevity by exploiting the more complex $NT \times NT$ error covariance matrix, denoted as Ω, and by transforming the model into a form that is conducive to estimation using OLS.[43] The procedure turns into feasible generalised least squares, however, because the true error covariance matrix always remains unknown up to a multiplicative constant, and the matrix used is therefore an estimate, $\widehat{\Omega}$, that is calculated on the basis of the β estimates of OLS. The coefficients estimated by FGLS can thus be denoted as $\hat{\beta}$ and are produced according to the following equation (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 81–82):

$$\hat{\beta}_{FGLS} = \left(\mathrm{X}'\widehat{\Omega}^{-1}\mathrm{X}\right)^{-1}\mathrm{X}'\widehat{\Omega}^{-1}\mathrm{y} \tag{4.5}$$

Finally, it is worth noting that although using a random effects model may seem to violate the underlying logic of my inquiry – it inherently harbours the notion of the data constituting a representative random sample rather than a population of non-exchangeable units – the inferences presented in the following would not have been significantly altered had I instead employed a fixed effects estimator (within estimator), with the obvious exception of the two quasi-time-invariant variables pertaining to ethnicity. The gained efficiency when using a RE model instead of a FE model does in other words not come at the expense of robustness. Having said this, let us now proceed to the actual analysis.

[43] In more exact parlance, GLS "transform[s] a system of equations where the error has nonscalar variance-covariance matrix into a system where the error vector has a scalar variance-covariance matrix" (Wooldridge 2002, 154).

5. Analysis

This section presents and discusses the results from the random effects regression analysis that tests the impact of voter heterogeneity on electoral competitiveness in line with the six hypotheses formulated in chapter three. Following Magaloni's (2008) theory, the analysis simultaneously evaluates alternative explanations for the observed degree of competitiveness by investigating the role of the dictator and the opposition, as well as the consequences of selected external factors.

The results from the baseline models are presented in the first two columns in Table 5.1, and are all-in-all quite encouraging – a systematic relationship indeed seems to exists between voter heterogeneity and the degree of competitiveness, with the independent variables being able to explain approximately a fifth of the observed variation in the margins of victory across and within countries (Model 1: R^2 = .215; Model 2: R^2 = .165).[44] However, this optimism must immediately be qualified by pointing out that this conclusion only holds true of certain forms of heterogeneity, seeing how the results in fact offer somewhat mixed support for the individual hypotheses. As the behaviour of the independent variables proves to be fairly consistent across all subsequent models, though, two distinct patterns can be discussed.

Looking at Table 5.1, the first main finding is that neither the affinity between the governing party's and the electorate's political views, nor the degree of urbanisation or the level of repression have a noticeable effect on the margins of victory in electoral autocracies. Indeed, the relevant variables consistently fall short of conventional levels of statistical significance, with the exception of *Repression* and the interaction variable consisting of the right-wing government dummy and urbanisation, which turn out to be significant at the .90 level in Models 1 and 3 respectively.[45] Despite the indicators generally behaving as predicted, hypotheses H_{1a}, H_4 and H_5 are in other words not supported by the outcome of the analysis.

[44] This interpretation of the goodness of fit (R^2) is derived from the fact that the random effects estimator in fact produces a weighted average of the *within* and *between estimators*.

[45] Because no theoretical assumptions were made with regard to the main effects of the dummy variables that gauge the political standing of the ruling party, the (insignificant) results for these indicators have been omitted from Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. *Effect of voter heterogeneity on electoral competitiveness*

	Coefficients							
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Government identity right × Urban population	-0.17 (0.26)		[-0.39* (0.24)]	[-0.29 (0.19)]	[-0.01 (0.29)]	[-0.29 (0.21)]	[-0.18 (0.24)]	[-0.40 (0.41)]
Government identity left × Urban population	0.14 (0.27)		[-0.19 (0.26)]	[-0.01 (0.24)]	[0.41 (0.32)]	[-0.10 (0.24)]	[-0.05 (0.29)]	[-0.04 (0.34)]
Ethnic first	0.48*** (0.16)	0.47*** (0.16)	0.43** (0.21)	0.42*** (0.16)	0.44*** (0.16)	0.41** (0.17)	0.45** (0.22)	0.50*** (0.19)
Ethnic groups	6.14*** (2.21)	6.29*** (2.29)	6.63** (2.62)	5.19** (2.11)	5.84** (2.43)	5.95*** (2.21)	6.14** (3.01)	6.62*** (2.66)
ln(GDP)		-4.15* (2.15)	-4.17* (2.20)	-4.18** (2.13)	-4.69* (2.65)	-5.40*** (2.08)	-8.55*** (2.58)	1.10 (3.04)
Economic growth	0.62*** (0.19)	0.65*** (0.21)	0.50 (0.52)	0.72*** (0.25)	0.80* (0.42)	0.91** (0.46)	1.11*** (0.42)	0.90** (0.46)
Urban population	-0.12 (0.16)		[0.14 (0.14)]	[-0.00 (0.13)]	[-0.24 (0.19)]	[0.04 (0.14)]	[-0.05 (0.18)]	[0.31 (0.28)]
Repression	2.94* (1.58)	1.58 (1.56)	2.45 (1.75)	-0.82 (1.66)	0.87 (1.94)	1.65 (1.95)	0.59 (2.16)	3.83 (2.63)
Singapore and Malaysia	46.58*** (6.17)	47.18*** (7.38)	48.25*** (9.14)	48.823*** (7.42)	45.18*** (6.91)	53.78*** (9.13)	61.13*** (11.45)	
Government consumption			0.59** (0.29)			0.57*** (0.23)	0.91*** (0.25)	0.29 (0.38)
Fraud			5.99 (3.89)			5.71* (3.46)	10.51*** (4.05)	1.31 (4.66)
Media bias			1.10 (3.41)					
Previous election			-0.53*** (0.06)			-0.53*** (0.06)	-0.47*** (0.07)	-0.44*** (0.08)

Table 5.1. *(Continued)*

	Coefficients							
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Boycott				16.31*** (3.66)		12.98*** (4.31)	7.09 (4.47)	23.51*** (7.08)
Protest				-1.31 (4.76)				
Opposition fragmentation				-6.05 (5.38)				
Aid					0.00 (0.07)			
Foreign direct investment					0.38 (0.45)			
Constant	-14.53 (17.54)	16.76 (26.84)	5.67 (29.43)	34.12 (26.99)	25.92 (31.65)	14.89 (27.10)	34.55 (32.54)	-48.33 (41.13)
N	343	339	240	313	286	270	175	95
R^2 (overall)	.215	.165	.308	.253	.152	.364	.359	.468

* significant at the 90% confidence level; ** significant at the 95% confidence level; *** significant at the 99% confidence level. Two-tailed.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustered by country); the results from the parallel models including the interaction variables and *Urban population* in brackets.

In spite of this outcome defying the theoretical expectations discussed earlier, it is not entirely out of line with Magaloni's argument. As regards the role of the incumbent party's economic policies, the results in fact conform well to Magaloni's tentative hunch about the relative insignificance of the dictator's ideological standpoints when explaining his electoral support – indeed, the voters seem in general to reason in terms of material concerns. Another interpretation is also possible, though. Since many of the countries in the analysis are characterised by instable and amorphous party systems, the result may also be reflective of the weak standing of political parties in these systems. When parties constitute little more than loose coalitions bound together, not by a common political ideology, but by mutual gain-seeking, the disillusioned voters are not likely to attach much importance to partisan labels or the contents of party manifestos.

Similarly, the results for repression may be understood in terms of the arguably subtle, but crucial distinction made earlier between the potential and actual use of force, and in this case, the insignificance of the latter may perhaps be explained by the successful use of the former. The fact that urbanisation is found to be non-significant must be considered more puzzling, however, as both models at the same time deliver strong evidence in favour of hypotheses H_{1b}, H_2 and H_3, including the argument made about the impact of increasing socio-economic development, which one would presume to have gone hand-in-hand with increasing urbanisation.

The second main finding is in other words that the ethnic composition of the electorate has a statistically significant effect on the degree of competitiveness alongside increasing wealth (GDP per capita) and economic growth. The evidence is far from unequivocal in the case of ethnicity, however, for although both indicators are highly significant, they also seem to warrant highly contradictious inferences about the consequences of ethnic heterogeneity for the degree of competitiveness: while the size of the largest ethnic group seems to give a boost to the dictator's vote share as predicted, so, too, does the overall number of ethnic groups. One way to enable a more substantive interpretation of these findings is to generate predictions using the mean effect of the respective variables. In this vein, the size of the largest ethnicity is predicted to inflate the dictator's margin by almost 28 percentage points when growing from a fifth to four fifths of the population. On the other hand, the number of ethnic groups will in line with the prediction boost the autocrat's vote share by some 38 percentage points as the number of ethnic groups rises from two to eight.

The fact that *both* ethnic concentration *and* ethnic dispersion consequently appear to be working in favour of the incumbent may in part be explained by the presence of multicollinearity in the model. However, because the number of ethnic groups is positively, albeit non-significantly, associated with the margin of victory even when no other indicator for ethnicity is included in the model (results not shown), it is also possible that the indicator itself is invalid. Echoing the constructivist critique of how most measures of ethnicity are incapable of distinguishing between situations where ethnic origin constitutes a politically salient identity and situations where it constitutes merely a latent identity (e.g. Chandra and Wilkinson 2008; Laitin and Posner 2001), it is a distinct possibility that the discovered relationship between the number of ethnic groups and the degree of electoral competitiveness – no matter how strong and positive it may be – is, in fact, spurious.

The impact of development on electoral competitiveness is also significant, even though its magnitude is considerably smaller: if GDP per capita increases by one per cent, the dictator's vote share is in accordance with Model 2 expected to shrink by an average of 0.042 percentage points, ceteris paribus.[46] In terms of predicted values, a country whose level of development roughly equals that of Zimbabwe in the 1970s with a GPD per capita rate of 308$, is thus expected to exhibit margins of victory on average 14 percentage points higher than those of a country resembling Mexico in the same decade, with a much higher GDP per capita of 8824$.

Even though this finding may be interpreted as a vindication of modernisation theory and its thesis of how increased wealth generates social diversity that in turn fosters competitiveness, it does not necessarily allow for too far-reaching conclusions since the measure is somewhat oblique as regards the exact nature of the discovered causal mechanism. The fact that *ln(GDP)* remains significant even when controlling for the impact of the dictator's resource monopoly in Model 3 does, nevertheless, lend some credit to Magaloni's proposal that accumulating wealth works by means of liberating the voters from the shackles of patronage.

The positive and significant impact of *Economic growth* implies in turn that long-term economic growth in part cancels out the consequences of voter heterogeneity since

[46] Because the model is one with random effects, interpreting the coefficients is slightly more complicated than in the case of an OLS regression in the sense that the coefficients in fact reflect the average effect of x over y when the former changes by one unit across time and between countries.

it induces the voters to support the incumbent at the polls, in the same vein as economic slumps are likely to erode his popularity. All else being equal, an average annual growth rate of 1% is thus expected to increase the autocrat's vote share by approximately 0.6 percentage points. What this means is that by moving from a country like Gabon, where the economy shrank by on average -0.21 percent annually in the early 2000s, to a country like its neighbour Equatorial Guinea, which at that time enjoyed an exceptionally strong average growth rate of 34.2 percent annually, the ruling incumbent's vote share is predicted to increase by some 22 percentage points.

This result is particularly interesting with regard to Magaloni's argument insofar as substituting the indicator with a more conventional measure that tracks macro-economic change only in the year preceding the election at hand, motivates substantially similar inferences (results not shown), but the variable is statistically significant only in half the models and, even then, only at the .90 level of significance. Subsequently, this evidence strongly corroborates Magaloni's view of the electorate repudiating economic myopia in favour of more long-term evaluations about the dictator's ability to handle the economy.

Finally, the dummy variable which is intended to control for the outlier-countries Singapore and Malaysia exhibits a strong, highly significant and positive effect on the margin of victory, reflecting the exceptionally strong electoral dominance of the ruling party especially in Singapore. As the extreme values both of these countries display with regard to GDP per capita and urbanisation represent rare cases rather than products of miss-coding, the decision to control for them in the analysis is not entirely undisputed from a methodological point of view, and leaving out *Singapore and Malaysia* indeed alters the findings somewhat. As can be seen from Table 5.2, which displays the results from Models 1 and 2 when no controls for outliers are included, the variables for both development and urbanisation now fall below conventional levels of statistical significance, in addition to which the latter also displays the "wrong" sign. Repression also turns insignificant in Model 1, on top of which the overall goodness of fit (R^2) drops rather markedly to some 10 per cent. However, since an omission of this controlling element does not significantly affect the behaviour of the other variables in these or any of the consequent models, making use of this perhaps less-than-best-practice only alters the inferences made about the impact of GPD per capita on electoral competitiveness. As concerns the choice of control, then, it should be stated that while the creation of a dummy variable emerges as a preferable alternative to simply eliminating these two

countries from the analysis, this second control method produces results substantially very similar to those presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. *Effect of voter heterogeneity on electoral competitiveness without controlling for Singapore and Malaysia*

	Coefficients	
Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Government identity right × Urban population	-0.35	
	(0.29)	
Government identity left × Urban population	-0.09	
	(0.29)	
Ethnic first	0.43***	0.46***
	(0.17)	(0.17)
Ethnic groups	5.92**	6.61***
	(2.35)	(2.48)
ln(GDP)		-2.14
		(2.71)
Economic growth	0.64***	0.65***
	(0.19)	(0.22)
Urban population	0.12	
	(0.22)	
Repression	2.60	1.62
	(1.60)	(1.60)
Constant	-16.94	2.55
	(20.79)	(32.63)
N	338	339
R^2 (overall)	.135	.08

* significant at the 90% confidence level; ** significant at the 95% confidence level; *** significant at the 99% confidence level. Two-tailed.
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (clustered by country).

Moving on to the further specifications, the fact that I am using two baseline models due to multicollinearity effectively necessitates running Models 3 through 8 twice – once using Model 1 with the interaction variables and *Urban population*, and once using Model 2 with *ln(GDP)*. As all the specifications yield practically the same results, however, only the results from regressions based on Model 2 are, in the interest of saving space, shown in Table 5.1. The coefficients and standard errors for the interaction variables and *Urban population* from the omitted parallel models are included in brackets.

The overall picture to emerge from this exercise is that the findings from Models 1 and 2 are in fact quite robust in the face of alternative specifications. Model 3 – the dictator model – tests the impact of the independent variables on competitiveness when controlling for the actions of the incumbent autocrat. Including these controls on aver-

age strengthens the effect of the explanatory variables somewhat, although the coefficient for economic growth now turns statistically insignificant. All the controls have the expected signs (remembering that positive values for *Previous election* indicate net vote-losses for the dictator), but only *Government consumption* – my proxy for patronage – and *Previous election* – my proxy for the dictator's perceived electoral vulnerability – appear to stand in a systematic relationship to the margins of victory. Neither of these two controls is highly influential, though, with a change of one unit producing an increase or decrease in the autocrat's margin of roughly half a percentage point when holding other factors constant. In the form of a more practical example, expanding the consumption of the public sector from 10% of GDP per capita in the 1970s to 25% by the 2000s is predicted to have brought about an increase of approximately 8.8 percentage points in the margins of victory in Burkina Faso.

Apart from fraud and media control, then, the findings once again correspond in a high degree to the theoretical expectations derived from Magaloni's theory. As concerns these two exceptions, the fact that *Fraud* is found to be a poor predictor of the degree of competitiveness is not entirely surprising, since this may be taken as a sign of electoral malpractices being generally redundant for maintaining the autocrat's electoral dominance. Alternatively, the indicator used to measure this factor may be too crude to capture the finer nuances of this highly multifaceted and covert phenomenon. This may also account for the fact that media restrictions display no effect significantly different from zero, which is otherwise a more perplexing finding seeing how this factor plays such a central role in Magaloni's argument.

Unfortunately, the results from this particular model are open to some debate as they could well be influenced by the rather stark drop in the number of observations if compared to the baseline models. Indeed, this appears on closer inspection to account in part for the fact that both economic growth and fraud emerge as statistically insignificant. Indeed, when dropping the variable *Previous election*, which suffers from a high number of missing observations, and thereby gaining an N of 279, economic growth once again emerges as significant at the .90 level (β = 0.77, SE = 0.42), whereas fraud now becomes highly significant at the .99 level (β = 10.22, SE = 3.36), meaning that the dictator can expect to inflate his vote share with no less than 10 percentage points when compared to holding clean elections, ceteris paribus. While the results for the other independent and control variables remain essentially the same (results not shown), this

indicates that we cannot exclude the possibility of fraud making a significant contribution to the maintenance of a low degree of competitiveness.

Model 4 – the opposition model – in turn evaluates the impact of the explanatory variables when holding the effects of the opposition's actions constant. As Table 5.1 reveals, the independent variables continue to be statistically significant even after this battery of control variables is included, with the interaction variables, urbanisation and repression once again constituting the exception. All these variables apart from *Ethnic groups* and *Repression* also display the predicted signs.

Of the controls, only boycotts have a noticeable effect on competitiveness. Not surprisingly, this effect qualifies as quite a substantial one – all else being equal, even a partial opposition boycott is predicted to raise the dictator's margin by some 16.3 percentage points in comparison to situations where the opposition decides to participate fully. The short-term consequences of "boo[ing] from the fences" (Schedler 2006, 14) are in other words dramatic and highly negative from the opposition's point of view, although one must bear in mind that this alone tells us little about the long-term effects of this tactic. The fragmentation of the opposition is, on the other hand, found to be non-significant, albeit with the "correct" sign. Because the indicator proxies the co-ordination dilemmas faced by the opposition parties by using their respective vote shares in the previous election, this may well be a function of the fact that the measure is incapable of tracking changes in intra-opposition relations – such as the creation of united opposition fronts – that take place in the time which falls in-between the two elections. Finally, the effect of opposition protests also falls short of statistical significance, perhaps reflecting the fact that this tactic can come to work in either direction.

Model 5 takes into account the influence of regime external factors and reveals a very similar picture as the earlier specifications, with the effect of voter heterogeneity as discovered in the baseline models remaining constant in form and significance. As both control variables turn out to be insignificant, it can be concluded that variation in the margins of victory cannot be explained by dependency on either development aid or foreign direct investment. This finding should, however, once again not cause us to jump to conclusions. It is, after all, conceivable that external factors may well have an effect on the margins of victory, but as it is far from easy to establish the exact causal mechanism through which they operate and create appropriate indicators with which to

test this relationship, the chosen indicators may simply be inappropriate for tracing these effects.[47]

Given the emergence of such a clear and consistent pattern, Model 6 builds upon the earlier specifications by including all independent variables alongside those control variables that were found to be approaching levels of statistical significance. This fully specified model not only has a much improved explanatory power ($R^2 = .36$) – the parallel model including the interaction variables and urbanisation is able to account for an even higher proportion of the overall variation in the margins of victory ($R^2 = .41$) – but also delivers further evidence to support the robustness of the argument advanced in this thesis as the obtained results mirror those of the baseline models almost exactly. Besides the four "usual suspects" among the independent variables, also government consumption, the dictator's electoral vulnerability as well as boycotts retain their significance alongside the outlier dummy variable *Singapore and Malaysia*.

Of greatest interest in this model is, however, the fact that the coefficient for fraud now turns significant at the .90 level, signifying that electoral malpractices can be expected to enhance the autocrat's vote share, ceteris paribus, by roughly 6 percentage points. Whether this is due to the existence of some complex and hitherto un-modelled relationship between the different strategies being controlled for in this model, or whether it is simply an artefact of the reduced number of observations as discussed earlier remains an open question, though.

Finally, Models 7 and 8 disaggregate the results from the fully specified model according to the type of election in order to investigate whether any systematic differences exist between parliamentary and presidential elections. The severely diminished number of observations again constitutes a serious predicament for statistical inference, and the results from these subsamples must therefore be considered far from decisive. Keeping this caveat in mind, it can nonetheless be observed that the results from Model 7, which covers legislative elections, mimic those from the composite model almost exactly with regard to both the independent variables and the controls – of the latter, only opposition

[47] There is indeed some evidence that this might be the case. If a regime's ties to geographically proximate democratic polities (typically operationalised in the literature as the proportion of democracies in a given regime's region in percentages) are included as an alternative measure, external factors turn out to have a highly significant and negative effect ($\beta = -0.34$, SE = 0.11, $p < .001$) on the margins of victory in this model. However, seeing that the literature fails to specify the actual factors that serve to bridle the dictator's willingness to resort to electoral malpractices and violence, hence bringing about the observed correlation, I am reluctant to use the variable in the actual analysis.

boycotts emerge as having no significant effect on the degree of competitiveness – and on average even grow in strength, with especially fraud now having a strong positive impact.

Model 8, which in turn focuses on presidential elections, paints a more complex picture. Of the independent variables, *ln(GDP)* is found to have no significant effect on the margin of victory, whereas the significance and strength of the others remain roughly the same. Since neither Singapore nor Malaysia organise competitive presidential elections within the chosen time-frame, this variable is omitted from the regression. The control variables are subject to changes, too, as neither government consumption nor fraud now appear to be systematically related to the degree of competitiveness. At the same time, the president's electoral track-record remains a good indicator of the margin of victory, as do opposition boycotts, which are expected to inflate the president's vote share by a whopping 23.5 percentage points, ceteris paribus.

These results, which in light of the low number of cases (N = 175 and N = 96, respectively) must be considered tentative at best, seem, on the one hand, to indicate that the strategies employed by the dictator and the opposition might in fact vary according to the type of election. As far as the dictator's strategic toolkit goes, the finding that co-optation, fraud and repression are not systematically related to the president's vote share must be considered somewhat perplexing, but it might indicate that this type of elections call for more targeted measures, which my indicators fail to account for. It is perfectly conceivable, for example, that the limited number of contestants running in a presidential race when compared to nation-wide legislative elections with hundreds or thousands of candidates, renders subjecting the opposition candidates to such highly targeted measures as house-arrests, feigned court-cases, wilful incarcerations and forced exiles more (cost-)effective than trying to suppress competitiveness with large-scale ballot rigging or vote buying (see also Schedler 2009b).

Boycotts appear in turn to be an essential tool for the opposition in presidential elections, but carry less weight in legislative battles – a finding that may warrant a substantive interpretation. For one, the president is typically the ruling head of state, and presidential races therefore tend to involve much higher stakes than legislative elections. As the presidential office is at the same time undividable, it is also more difficult to co-opt and divide the opposition in presidential elections than in legislative races, where multiple seats are up for grabs. On the basis of this, it may hypothesised that the winner-takes-it-all-logic underlying presidential elections yields more comprehensive and

forceful opposition boycotts than legislative elections where free-riding is likely to water down the effect of the measure.

On the other hand and more importantly for the current investigation, voter behaviour as a mirror of the electorate's socio-demographic heterogeneity does not, with the sole exception of increasing wealth, reveal any systematic changes when moving from one type of election to the other. Thus, voters and voter heterogeneity appear to matter for the outcome of both presidential and legislative elections under electoral authoritarian rule.

In conclusion, the analysis delivers strong evidence in support of the research question under exploration in this thesis. By virtue of the diverging voting behaviours it generates, the socio-demographic composition of the electorate indeed constitutes one of the major determinants of competitiveness in electoral authoritarian regimes, even when controlling for numerous alternative explanations. It may, by means of logical extension, further be expected to function as an important indicator of the political stability of this particular regime type, even though this topic lies beyond the scope of the current investigation.

At the same time, the analysis provides less than straight-forward support for the six hypotheses seeking to parse the individual components of this heterogeneity and their respective effects on the dependent variable in line with Magaloni's (2008) theory. The factors that were found to be good indicators of the degree of electoral competitiveness include ethnicity, the level of societal development and long-term economic growth, even though ethnicity failed to behave in accordance with the original theoretical expectations and the effect of GDP per capita appears to be contingent upon controlling for outliers. The hypotheses proposing that the ruling party's political standpoints relative to those of the electorate, increasing urbanisation and the use of repression have an impact on the margins of victory clearly did not live up to scrutiny. In this light, we may conclude that only certain types of heterogeneity seem to breed identities that are politically salient and, consequently, spill over to voting behaviour. This also holds true of the factors that might cancel out the effects of heterogeneity, as only economic growth was found to be significant.

Additional findings of interest pertain to the roles of the ruling dictator and the opposition parties. All in all, the analysis finds evidence to support the claim advanced by earlier studies of how competitive non-democratic elections tend to be affairs stage-managed by the dictator. Accordingly, only boycotts appear to make a difference to the

margins of victory as far as the tactics of the opposition parties are concerned, and even they tend to benefit the dictator, at least in the short run. At the same time, the importance of the dictator having access to politicised resources, possessing a convincing electoral track-record and being dexterous in tampering with vote ballots appears to be vindicated, although fraud is not consistently significant, at the same time as a media bias in the incumbent autocrat's favour is found to be non-significant. Finally, the evidence does not suggest that external factors belong among the most important determinants of competitiveness, although it must be recognised that this finding may be an artefact of the chosen variables.

6. Conclusion

In the wake of the third wave of democratisation, electoral autocracies have risen to become the modal type of non-democratic rule in the world. Characterised by an uneasy combination of real but unfair electoral competition for political power, these systems are prone to engender conflicting political dynamics, whose consequences for the continuation of autocratic rule as well as for the prospects of democratisation have been the subject of intense theorisation and empirical research in recent years.

In this electoral game, the degree of competitiveness as a mirror of the underlying balance of power between the ruling autocrat and the opposition has been recognised to play a pivotal role in shaping the electoral outcome and determining the stability of the regime. At the same time, however, investigations into the determinants of competitiveness in non-democratic elections have remained relatively scarce and limited in scope. Especially the role of the voters has long been all but ignored here as scholars have continued to entertain simplistic and unrealistic notions about a homogeneous and essentially passive electorate, while focusing their efforts predominantly on the actions of the other players. The very real possibility of the electorate as a collective of heterogeneous actors with heterogeneous preferences making an active contribution to the maintenance and dismantling of electoral equilibria has hence remained a virtually unexplored topic in the literature on electoral authoritarian regimes.

In seeking an answer to this – in my view – pivotal question of whether voter heterogeneity stands in a systematic relationship to the degree of competitiveness, Beatriz Magaloni's (2008) theory of voter behaviour offered an auspicious starting point. By modelling competitive authoritarian elections as a decision-theoretic game taking place within the idiosyncratic institutional constraints of electoral authoritarian rule, Magaloni explicitly demonstrates how different forms of voter heterogeneity spill over to voting behaviour that either strengthens or weakens the dictator's electoral dominance. By concurrently illustrating the behaviour of the other actors, the theory also enables a theoretically more comprehensive analysis of the political dynamics of electoral authoritarian regimes than rivalling theories.

From this theoretical baseline, I moved on to model the hypothesised relationship under investigation. In the operationalisation and the creation of the models, an effort was made to take into account alternative explanations that might explain the observed

level of competitiveness, but attention was also paid to making methodological improvements by employing more appropriate datasets and more rigorous methods.

I then proceeded to the actual analysis, which tested the existence of the suggested relationship between voter heterogeneity and competitiveness by employing a random effects regression analysis encompassing the universe of competitive authoritarian elections from 1974 to 2006. The overall results of this analysis confirmed the existence of such a systematic link, even though this relationship emerged as being contingent upon the form of voter heterogeneity, seeing how the analysis in fact offered mixed support for the six research hypotheses, as well as for the controlling variables.

In the light of my analysis, the following picture emerges of the electoral dynamics in competitive authoritarian elections. When casting their ballots, voters in electoral autocracies appear to be motivated primarily by economic concerns rather than ideology or the fear of violent repercussions from the side of the dictator. Furthermore, their choices do not seem to vary according to their place of residence. Because the voters will thus support the dictator as long as they depend upon him for their livelihood, increasing wealth and socio-economic heterogeneity are predicted to erode the autocrat's electoral margins by enabling the voters to make "ideological investments". Even richer voters benefit from a booming economy, however, and are under such circumstances expected to relinquish their plans to vote for the opposition. The voters will also support the dictator on the grounds of a common ethnic affiliation, perhaps because they share some deep ontological feeling of community or because kinship is tied to the distribution of patronage.

Voter heterogeneity seems in other words to translate into vote choices and competitiveness primarily through the voters' ethnic affiliations and their level of income. These results of are mostly consistent with the findings of earlier studies (Greene 2010; Schedler 2009b; but see Roessler and Howard 2008), although the outcome for ethnicity appears somewhat ambiguous in my analysis, as also growing ethnic heterogeneity was found to increase the dictator's margin of victory; on closer inspection, this discrepancy is probably a consequence of spurious correlation between the number of ethnic groups and the degree of competitiveness.

Exploiting the voters' behaviour, the dictator in turn seeks to boost his vote share by resorting to patronage networks built on politicised resources and by erecting an impression of electoral invulnerability, which is to deter voters from defecting to the opposition. The dictator may also – when all else fails – take to fraud to maintain his hold on

power. Within the parameters of the electoral game, the opposition is not left with many options of action and only boycotts were found to have a (strongly negative) impact on the degree of competitiveness.

These findings are perfectly in line with Magaloni's theory and mostly in line with the findings of other contributions (Greene 2010; Schedler 2009b). So, too, is the result of external factors being redundant for the degree of competitiveness (Roessler and Howard 2008). On the other hand, the fact that the analysis provided no support for the claim that media restrictions, opposition protests or the unity of the opposition have an impact on the degree of competitiveness contradicts the findings of Roessler and Howard (2008), Schedler (2009b) and Greene (2010), alongside Magaloni's own argument.

On the basis of its contradictious findings, but also of its more general strengths and weakness, the analysis can be thought of as having four broader implications for the current and future study of competitiveness in electoral autocracies. Starting off on a methodological note, it reveals first of all a need for greater conceptual, theoretical and methodological integration in the field. Indeed, the fact that my results in many instances contradict earlier contributions – including, to a lesser extent, Magaloni's theory – confirms a point reverberated throughout this thesis, namely, that our understanding of what causes the degree of competitiveness to vary remains piecemeal and is blurred by an inconsistent empirical picture.

Of course, it is not impossible that the observed incongruities mirror real substantive differences between countries or regime subtypes. It is, for instance, not difficult to hypothesise that presidential and legislative systems may display slightly diverging dynamics, provided that the findings from Models 7 and 8 in the previous chapter are representative of their respective subsamples. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that these discrepancies in fact only reflect differences in the methodological, theoretical and conceptual choices made by the respective scholars, such as how the universe of cases has been defined or how the dependent variable has been operationalised. While such pluralism is not intrinsically harmful, in the absence of "common land" to stand upon it renders comparisons between these studies in the interest of making broader inferences and generalisations exceedingly tricky owing to the fact that the studies cover such a colourful mixture of different countries, years and mechanisms.

At the same time, my analysis indicates that this type of integration is not impossible to achieve. If we briefly turn to evaluate the generalisability of Magaloni's argument, it is clear that some of the results of my analysis run contrary to the expectations derived

from her theory, especially as regards the opposition. Whether this is due to the limited explanatory power of the argument itself, or to my conceptualisation and operationalisation of the relevant variables, cannot be determined in the light of the current investigation. Concurrently, the overall results seem to testify to the solid explanatory power of Magaloni's core argument, i.e. the role played by the voters, with the insignificance of urbanisation emerging in this vein as the sole true abnormality to evade a plausible explanation in the global inquiry. While Magaloni's theory hence cannot be elevated to the status of a general theory of competitiveness under autocracy, her efforts could serve as an example to newer contributions seeking to create a more ambitious framework for analysing electoral competition.

Secondly, the analysis bears witness to the fact that obtaining reliable data and developing appropriate indicators with which to investigate many of the factors that are central to the study of electoral authoritarian regimes continues to be Sisyphean labour. Even though the current investigation warrants the merit of seeking to expand the theoretical scope of the analysis in order to produce more valid generalisations, this effort is probably undermined by it having to settle for proxy indicators and other "second-best" alternatives when choosing its variables. While my study is far from alone in this, the consequences of this practice for the validity of the results must be considered negative.

Thirdly and on a more substantive note, my analysis also shows that the power invested in citizens by dictators when instituting competitive elections ought – contrary to the general view held in the literature on electoral authoritarianism – to be taken seriously. In doing so, my thesis both demonstrates and underscores the need to broaden and systematise our view of electoral competitiveness so as to also include the electorate (and structural factors) amongst its determinants. At the same time, however, the current analysis surely cannot be considered more than a tentative first step in the direction of exploring this vast lacuna.

The fact of the matter is that Magaloni's theory – in its current formulation, anyway – would hardly allow for a more elaborate investigation into all the potentially significant forms of voter heterogeneity. But despite Magaloni's theory doing a decent job at modelling voter behaviour within its current parameters, this by no means indicates that further theories could not, or should not, be developed to investigate the workings of hitherto ignored forms of voter heterogeneity. Indeed, complementing our understanding of the various political identities that guide voter behaviour with an exploration of additional and previously unexplored ones, while refining our knowledge of how eth-

nicity and increasing wealth come to operate, seems in the light of the current investigation to be a recommendable next step in the study of electoral autocracies.

Fourthly and finally, the analysis points to the need of adopting a more comprehensive analytical approach when examining the role played by voters in electoral autocracies. This plea pertains above all to questions of whether the observed relationship between voter heterogeneity and electoral competitiveness may be expected to naturally extend itself to one between voter heterogeneity and democratisation, and what the form of this relationship in that case would be. Could heightened competitiveness as a result of increasing socio-economic heterogeneity be a conducive combination for establishing a stable democratic polity, as postulated by Dahl (1971)? Or perhaps a high degree of competitiveness that builds upon ethnic heterogeneity is likely to yield a spiral of violence rather than set the country on the path to popular rule (Mousseau 2001)?

While such questions unfortunately lie beyond the scope of this thesis, they will before long become indispensable for the study of electoral authoritarianism at large. After all, it is precisely this issue of who wins on Election Day that renders electoral competitiveness important for scholars, democracy promoters and the participating actors alike. And it is precisely here that the diverging choices and actions of heterogeneous voters step into the analytical limelight. As Magaloni (2008, 19) points out, vote choices are under electoral authoritarian rule often constrained by complex strategic dilemmas that impede the voters from simply ousting the incumbent autocrat – this being the "tragic brilliance" of such systems. Although beggars cannot be choosers, the possibility of "throwing the rascals out" does emerge once broader socio-demographic changes enable increasing numbers of voters to break loose from these shackles and to exercise the rights bestowed upon them by the principle of competitive elections. And once this possibility exists, every now and then the voters indeed choose to throw the rascals out.

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Appendix 1: Description of variables and data sources

Variable	Indicator	Source
Margin of victory	In presidential elections the difference in vote shares between the winner and the runner-up as a percentage of total valid votes in the first round; In legislative elections the difference in seat shares between the largest and the second largest party as a percentage	Nohlen et al. (2005a, 2005b; 2001a, 2001b; 2000; 2010) IFES (2011) African Elections Database (2011)
Government identity	Measure of the ruling party's ideological orientation with three categories: right, centre and left	DPI (Beck et al. 2001) Day and Degenhardt (Various years)
Ethnic first	The size of the largest ethnic group as a percentage of the total population	Ellingsen (2000)
Ethnic groups	The number of ethnic groups that constitute 5 per cent or more of the total population	Ellingsen (2000)
ln(GDP)	Natural log of PPP Converted GDP Per Capita (Chain Series), at 2005 constant prices	Penn World Tables 7 (Heston, Summers, and Aten 2011)
Economic growth	Average change in GDP in percentages between elections or during five years before the election at hand if no previous election	World Development Indicators (World Bank 2011)
Urban population	Urban population as a percentage of total population	World Development Indicators (World Bank 2011)
Repression	The Freedom House Civil Liberties scale (1-7) lagged by one year	Freedom House (2011)
Singapore and Malaysia	Dichotomous variable coded 1 when election was held in Singapore or Malaysia, otherwise 0	NELDA (Hyde and Marinov 2010)

Government consumption	Annual general government final consumption including expenditures for purchases, services and wages as a percentage of GDP	World Development Indicators (World Bank 2011)
Fraud	Dichotomous variable coded 1 if electoral fraud is reported, otherwise 0	NELDA (Hyde and Marinov 2010)
Media bias	Dichotomous variable coded 1 if reported allegations of the media being biased in favour of the incumbent are made, otherwise 0	NELDA (Hyde and Marinov 2010)
Previous election	Change in the incumbent's vote share in percentages since the previous election.	Nohlen et al. (2005a, 2005b; 2001a, 2001b; 2000; 2010) IFES (2011) African Elections Database (2011)
Boycott	Dichotomous variable coded 1 if at least some of the opposition parties boycotted the election, otherwise 0	NELDA (Hyde and Marinov 2010)
Protest	Dichotomous variable coded 1 if at least some of the opposition parties protested the outcome of the election, otherwise 0, and lagged by one election cycle	NELDA (Hyde and Marinov 2010)
Opposition fragmentation	Fractionalisation of the opposition measured by dividing the seat (L)/vote (P) share of the first opposition party by the sum of the total seat/vote share of all opposition parties	Nohlen et al. (2005a, 2005b; 2001a, 2001b; 2000; 2010) IFES (2011) African Elections Database (2011) IPU (Various years)

Aid	Average percentage change in net ODA received as a percentage of GNI in the two years preceding the election at hand	World Development Indicators (World Bank 2011)
Foreign direct investment	Average net inflow of foreign direct investment as a percentage of GDP in the two years preceding the election at hand	World Development Indicators (World Bank 2011)